

Vegetables, Small Fruit, Home Gardens, Fields, and Pastures:

With a shovel, trowel, or auger, and a clean bucket or pail, obtain thin slices or borings of soil from at least 13 places in a given area. Follow the diagram below to properly locate the samples. For sloping land (contour strips), take 6 samples 20 feet in from the edge of the entire strip and 6 samples from the opposite side of the strip. Sample down to the tilling or plowing depth on cultivated lands or to a depth of 6 inches. In pastures, you need only sample to a depth of 3 or 4 inches. If the field, pasture, or garden varies in soil type, previous fertilizer or lime application, or cropping history, sample each area separately for best results and interpretation. Take at least 2 cups worth of soil for each sample you intend to submit to a lab. Mix the soil well in your bucket or pail. If your soil is wet, you can spread your mixed soil sample on newspaper in a warm room overnight to dry before shipping.

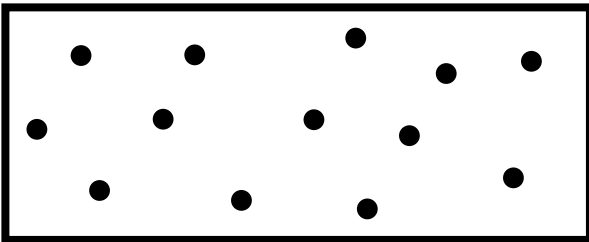


Figure 1. Rectangular pasture, field, turf, or garden plot showing 13 points of collection to obtain one representative soil sample.

Turf

With a shovel, trowel, or auger, and a clean bucket or pail, obtain thin slices or borings of soil from at least 13 places in a given area. Sample to a depth of 2 to 3 inches. If the area varies in kind of soil, previous fertilizer or lime treatments, use separate container bags for each different area. Discard all grass and accumulated root and thatch material. If you have a situation where a maintenance recommendation for an existing turf area is desired and also a recommendation for establishing a new turf area is desired, you must use different container bags for each area (they will have different soil test interpretations for management).

Packaging and Labeling

For shipping, place each 2 cups worth of soil in a plastic quart size zip-top bag. Make sure you use a permanent marker to label your sample with sample location and date. If you have multiple samples to ship, make sure each label is unique and traceable to where it was taken from.

Select a Soil Testing Lab

Please see the Soil Testing Lab Information Sheet to choose a soil testing lab. The labs listed are just common examples, UAF CES does not recommend one lab over another. Fill out the appropriate submission form and include the proper payment information.

Mail Your Samples to the Soil Testing Lab

Once you have selected the soil testing lab you will use, place your sample bags and appropriate submission form and payment information in the package. In Alaska, many people will use flat rate USPS boxes to ship samples, since soil samples can be heavy.