



New Canaan Nature Center

How to Take a Representative Soil Sample

Sample depths are measured from the soil surface down. For lawns, sample to a depth of 4 inches, excluding any turf thatch. For vegetable and flower gardens, sample to the depth that you plan to incorporate lime or fertilizer, usually 6 to 8 inches. In mulched beds of trees and shrubs, remove any mulch or surface debris, then sample to a depth of 6 inches.

Recommended Sampling Depths	
Established lawns	2-4 inches
Vegetable and flower gardens	6-8 inches or tillage depth
Trees and shrubs	6 inches

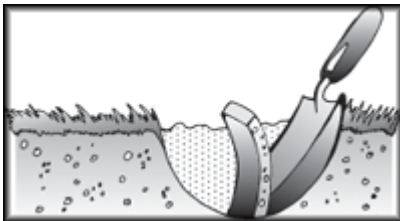
When sampling around established trees and shrubs, take sub-samples from an area near the trunk to the outer edges of the branches (the drip line).

How to Take Soil Sub-Samples

An accurate soil sample must be taken from uniform soil areas made up of multiple sub-samples. These sub-samples are mixed together to make up the composite soil sample for that area. This section describes how to take the soil sub-sample.



STEP 1: Open a hole with a shovel, spade or trowel from the surface to the proper depth for your landscape area. Set that soil aside. (If you are using a soil probe, insert it into the soil to the proper depth and remove the plug from the ground).



STEP 2: With your shovel or trowel remove a 1 inch thick slice from the smooth side of the open hole.



STEP 3: With the slice of soil on the blade of the shovel, remove the sides of the slice with a trowel, knife or your hands to create a ribbon of soil 2 inches wide and 1 inch thick of the proper depth. Place the ribbon (or plug if using a soil probe) into a container.