**Sharon Garden Club Soil pH Testing: How to Collect a Good Soil Sample**

Getting your soil tested is the smartest first step you can take to be sure your plants are compatible with your soils and have the best chance of thriving.

**The most critical step in soil testing is collecting the sample.** It is important that you take the necessary steps to obtain a representative sample; a poor sample could result in erroneous recommendations.

- The first step is to determine the use area that will be represented by the sample. For instance your use area could be a vegetable garden, flower garden, raised bed, or area of lawn (turf).
- You'll be collecting sub-samples of soil from several spots in each of your testing areas. Before collecting each sub-sample, remove or rake off any mulch that is covering the collection spot.
- Using a clean bucket and a spade, trowel, auger, or sampling tube, collect several samples to a depth of six to eight inches (four to six inches for turf) from random spots within your defined area. Avoid sampling the very edges and other non-representative areas. Avoid sampling when the soil is very wet or within six to eight weeks after a lime or fertilizer application.
- Next, break up any lumps or clods of soil, remove stones, roots, and debris, and thoroughly mix the sub-samples in your bucket.
- Once the sample is thoroughly mixed, scoop out approximately one half cup of soil and spread it on a clean sheet of paper in a sunny spot to air-dry, and label your sample by use area/ID or other essential identifying info. Do not apply heat to hasten the drying process**.**
- **Do not bring wet soil samples for testing. Your soil will not be tested if it is too wet.**
- Return the soil that remains in your bucket to your sampling spots, and re-spread your mulch if you removed it earlier.
- Label a container (such as a plastic bag) with your name, phone number, and use area/ID.
- Place your dry sample in your container, and bring it to the soil testing table at the plant sale. There, you'll complete an order form and pay a $5 soil pH testing fee for each sample. Checks or cash are accepted. Once the test is complete, you'll receive recommendations appropriate for amending the soil for your sampled area for your intended use.

Thank you for supporting the Sharon Garden Club!