How to take a Soil Sample

... and why
Oregon State College soil testing service will help you reap greater profits from your fertilizer and lime dollar.

A soil test will help you:
- Select fertilizers you need
- Avoid using excess fertilizer
- Build a more productive soil

Obtain soil sample cartons and information from your County Extension Agent and follow these easy steps:

- Good sampling tools make the job easy. Special equipment is not necessary.
- Sample to plow depth—or about 6 to 8 inches.
- Divide your farm into sampling areas by 1) soil type, 2) past fertilizer treatment, and 3) cropping history.
- Make up each sample with soil taken from 15 to 20 locations within the sampling area.
- Fill out the information sheet, and mail it with the sample.
- Be sure to number each sample. Keep your own record on the fields you sample.
- Mix in a clean container and fill the soil carton with the soil mixture.

Send samples early. It takes 3 to 4 weeks to do the laboratory work and get the information back to you.

Send samples to
Soil Testing Laboratory
Oregon State College
Corvallis, Oregon
Here is the way one 40-acre tract was divided for sampling.

- Area 1 has been in grain for several years. One hundred pounds of nitrogen per acre have been added for the past four crops.
- Areas 2 and 4 are irrigated pasture. They have been fertilized with 300 pounds of 16-20-0 for the past 3 years. Most of the clover is gone from Area 2; there is good clover in Area 4.
- Area 3 has grown grass seed for the past 6 years. Ammonium nitrate has been added each year at 250 pounds per acre.

The diagram in Area 1 shows how a good sample can be made up by taking soil from 15 locations. A similar pattern should be followed in making up the sample for each of the areas.

The soil analysis will show the availability of plant nutrients, the need for lime, and the presence of harmful salts.

Soil test results are sent to your County Extension Agent. He makes the fertilizer recommendations—what material to use, how much, when, and how. Recommendations are based on the soil analysis, experimental results, soil surveys, and results obtained by other farmers in your area.

Sampling for the first time?

If you can't undertake a complete job now, start with three or four samples. Don't try to make the average sample from the entire farm or large field. Sample a definite area from each soil type. Future samples can be added in a logical order.

Fertilizer banding makes a special problem

Band applications of phosphorus and potassium are common on some crops. A sample containing part of the banded material will give you an overoptimistic story.

When a crop is still growing, don't take soil from near the bands. If the field has been disked or plowed, sample at least 35 to 40 places in a 10- to 15-acre field.

Explain the method of fertilizer application, the amount used, and the sampling method on the information sheet.

Home gardens and lawns.

Each area should be sampled separately. Samples should be made up of soil from 10 or more locations—even though the area is quite small.