



The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association (MMGA) will be offering free soil pH testing at Gardening Green Expo on Saturday, March 30th at Kennedy's Country Gardens in Scituate from 10am-4pm.

One of the most important components of a healthy garden is good soil. pH (a numeric score indicating soil acidity or alkalinity) is one measure of soil health. Why test your soil pH? When pH is too low or too high, plants cannot access needed nutrients which may already be present in the soil, negatively impacting plant performance.

Different plants have different pH requirements; in addition to their pH results, event participants will receive a 2-page fact sheet listing the optimum pH for over 200 plants. For participants who need to adjust their pH, we will be providing a sheet of suggestions for the use of limestone (to raise) and sulfur (to lower) readings. If test results indicate the need for a more comprehensive soil test, we will provide information on services offered by the UMass Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Lab.

Taking a soil sample for pH testing is easy:

- (1) Identify the area(s) of your property you want to test:** Different areas may have different pH levels, e.g., lawn vs. flower bed vs. vegetable garden. To submit different areas for testing, collect separate samples. Within a given area, if there are sections that are sickly vs. healthy, they should also be sampled and labeled separately (e.g., sickly vs. healthy sections of lawn).
- (2) Gather your supplies:**
 - A spade, shovel, soil probe, or augur for digging your sample(s)
 - One small clean bucket for each area you plan to sample (e.g., one bucket for the lawn, a separate bucket for your flower bed)
 - One small plastic bag for each area to be sampled
- (3) Dig your soil sample(s):**
 - **Step A:** Depending on how large the area is, dig 5-10 holes approx. 6-8" deep for gardens (4-6" deep for lawns; 8-10" deep for trees/ shrubs); remove a sample of the soil all the way down to the depth of the hole; in other words, collect soil from the top, the middle and the bottom of the hole.
 - **Step B:** Combine all soil samples from the same area in a clean bucket. Mix thoroughly and remove stones, sticks or other debris.
 - **Step C:** Let the soil dry out for a few days in the bucket.
 - **Step D:** Put approx. 1/2 cup of dry soil into a plastic bag. Mark the bag with your name and the area of your property where the sample was taken (e.g., lawn, rhododendron bed).
 - If you want to sample additional areas of your property, repeat Steps A-B-C-D above.
- (4) Bring your sample(s) to the Master Gardener Soil pH Testing table at Gardening Green Expo on Saturday, March 30th at Kennedy's Country Gardens in Scituate from 10am-4pm.**