



Soil Testing

It's time to prepare your garden for planting. Creating good soil is essential for any garden. In order for plants to thrive, the soil must have a good balance of all the crucial components. Rich garden soil is the foundation for garden success. That is why getting your soil tested is one of the most important things that you can do. The soil test is an excellent measure of soil fertility.

Developing and maintaining productive soil begins with a soil test. I can't tell you how many people have called or have come into the Shelby County Extension Office seeking information about getting their soil tested. The running joke in our office is if you ask an extension agent about a problem related to plants or grasses, they will suggest a soil test. The soil test is a very inexpensive way to determine the current condition of the soil and what is needed to maintain optimum performance.

A soil test is a process by which elements are chemically removed from the soil and measured for their "plant available" content within the sample. This test provides information on the soil's actual nutrient status. Test results are used to determine the amount and kinds of nutrients that should be added for the best growth of lawn, garden and other types of plants.

Recommendations about when and how to apply nutrients are only as good as the soil sample submitted for analysis. Taking a good sample entails the following steps: identifying sampling locations (zones), determine the sampling depths, use of the right sampling tools, taking the sample at the right time and handling the samples accordingly.

Soil can be tested any time of the year. Be sure to allow enough time for the analysis and for fertilizer and lime application before planting. Generally the turn-around-time to get your results is seven to ten days depending on the time of the year.

Information about soil tests and their interpretation is available on our state website at <http://aq.tennessee.edu/spp/Pages/soiltesting.aspx>. If you need further information or have questions about your test results you can visit our office or give me a call and we can go through this information with you. I will be more than happy to help! We have all of the handouts and soil boxes that you need.

So when you need precise information of the soil in your flowerbed or vegetable garden, get your soil tested. It makes a difference!

Dr. Christopher Cooper



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.