

Guidance on collecting & sending soil samples for analysis

Please read this document before placing an order. It provides an overview of the procedure.

Many factors affect soil properties & nutrients. Analysis of a particular site will help guides its future management. Therefore, each soil sample needs to be representative of the site.

Clients wishing to receive analysis from differently cultivated areas (e.g. lawn & vegetable plot) are strongly advised to gather samples from each separately (Fig. 1). This is because their different cultivation styles will strongly influence soil properties.

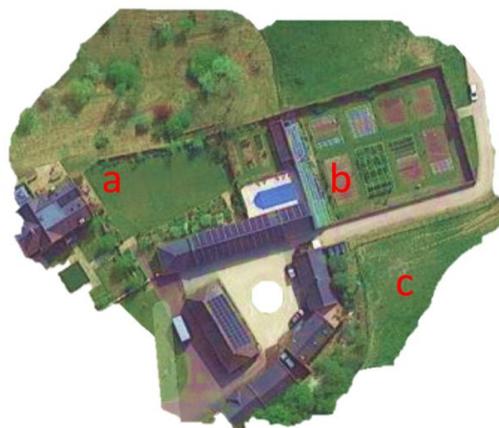


Fig. 1. Map indicating three different areas (a) lawn, (b) vegetable garden, (c) arable field. Each should be analysed separately.

Within a single area there may be locations where sampling is best avoided. These include bonfire sites, places where manure has been recently stored or where major excavations have occurred. Samples from these atypical locations are likely to provide results that, in analysis, bias the entire area.

Sampling procedure

Sampling is normally done by the client (although quotes can be given to include this as part of your soil analysis package. Just [email](#) to enquire.

A range of different garden tools (Fig. 2) can be used to collect soil samples (spade, trowel, soil augur or bulb planter). The latter is useful as it cuts a cylinder of soil to a depth of 15cm (6").



Fig. 2. Clean tools are best used excavate the holes.



Fig. 3. Top 1cm layer of soil & vegetation removed (arrow). Vertical slice taken from the hole to 15cm deep.

1. Remove the top 2.5cm (1") of soil & vegetation & place to one side.
Dig a 15cm (6") deep hole. If the soil is very shallow, the hole should be no deeper than the rooting area where most roots occur.
2. Remove a vertical section, 2.5cm (1") wide, 15cm (6in) deep from the top of the hole to the bottom (see Fig. 3).

3. Place the sample into a clean, dry bucket, removing stones, roots, vegetation & leaf litter. Repeat **ten times** evenly spaced over the survey area, each time collecting the same amount of soil as the first & placing them all in the bucket (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2. Mix all samples from a single site together.

4. When sampling large areas (e.g. fields, increase the sample number to 25. Follow the line of an imagined letter 'W' across the site (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. in the case of large areas, sampling should be conducted across the site following an imagined letter 'W'

5. Once all samples have been gathered thoroughly mix them in the bucket.
6. Remove 400g, about two large handfuls for the Bronze & Wildflower Service, three large handfuls for the Silver and Gold Service.
7. Place into a double plastic bag & seal (Fig. 6).
8. Label the bag with a unique reference (that means something to you). The written report will be identified by this unique reference. This is especially important if sending samples from differently cultivated areas (e.g. vegetable garden, greenhouse, lawn, field).
9. Wrap the bagged sample(s) & label with:

Soil Values,
6 Greenford View,
Higher Frome Vauchurch,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0AS



Fig. 6. A sample of 400g of soil doubled-bagged.

10. Post the sample. If nitrate, ammonium, and nitrite are being analysed then samples are best sent 'next day delivery' because bacteria in the soil can change the concentrations. Due to this, these samples will be analysed on the day of arrival.