

Sampling Instructions For Candlewood's 2019 Soil Testing Program

It's smart, free & easy!

- Sponsored by the Candlewood Watershed Initiative, Candlewood Lake Authority,
& Friends of Ball Pond in conjunction with the CT Agricultural Experiment Station -

Purpose & Overview

Candlewood's Soil Testing Program is provided as a community service to advise residents about their soil's fertility and corresponding fertilizer considerations. It involves taking soil samples from one's lawn &/or garden and mailing those samples to the Soil Test Lab at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven for analysis. Following evaluation, and within ~2 weeks, the Soil Test Lab will then send a written report back to each participant with results and fertilizing recommendations specific to their soil's particular make-up and condition. Over 1,050 local residents have benefitted to date.

This year's program format, termed 'Soil Testing by Mail,' is being made available to property owners throughout the Candlewood Lake Watershed (and beyond) and involves 6 simple steps:

1. Print out and follow these Sampling Instructions
2. Scoop, mix & insert soil samples into standard zip-lock plastic baggies
3. Complete the Transmittal Form (on pg. 2) and insert into a padded mail envelope, together with the baggies containing the soil samples
4. Mail envelope to the Test Lab in New Haven per these Instructions
5. Await results and suggestions by mail directly from the Lab
6. Visit one of our garden center sponsors or other vendors to fulfill your fertilizer needs.

This event is intended to raise awareness of the importance of testing one's soil *before* fertilizing to ensure that it is necessary and appropriate to conditions, provides the correct nutrient mix, and is properly applied. The net result will be healthier lawns and gardens and, importantly, a healthier Lake and Watershed environment free of unnecessary or over-applications of fertilizer. Reduced time, effort and fertilizer expenses can likewise be expected.

Sampling Instructions

Use one or more quart-size, zip-lock plastic baggies to securely contain your soil samples. The number of baggies needed depends on the uniformity of your soil and whether you want both your lawn and garden analyzed. For each area to be tested, draw a separate, representative sample by removing narrow slices or 'cores' of soil using a garden trowel or similar tool:

- **For uniform lawns** – of ~½ acre of grass, draw ~10 cores; of ~1 acre, draw ~15 cores; lawn cores should be drawn from the upper 4" of soil -- then remove any grass, thatch, or roots
- **For uniform gardens** – that are small/typical, draw ~6 cores; for larger gardens, draw ~10 cores; garden cores should be drawn from the upper 6" of soil
- **For lawn or garden areas that are not uniform** in their nutrient content, separate representative cores should be drawn from each different area
- **For unusual or difficult conditions**, problem areas, or special testing requirements, contact the Test Lab before drawing samples (see contact info below; note the Lab is not open on weekends).

For each separate area being sampled, thoroughly mix the soil cores together in a bucket to get a uniform sample; then pour this mixture into a plastic baggie until ~½ full. Do likewise with cores from second area using a separate baggie, etc. Ideally these soil samples should be dry; if necessary, moist samples will be accepted. Label each baggie using a Sharpie or similar permanent marker with your last name, sample #, and sampling area description (e.g., *Smith - #1 - Front Lawn*) and make corresponding entries on the Transmittal Form below for each area sampled.

Transmittal Instructions

Complete the following Soil Sample Transmittal Form (if you would prefer organic fertilizer recommendations, so note), run a copy for your records, fold in ½, and insert with the corresponding baggies into a padded mail envelope. Mail the package to the Test Lab at the address noted below.

Soil Test Results

Test results are typically mailed back within ~2 weeks. Soil samples are tested for texture (sand, loam, clay composition, etc.), organic matter, and nutrients (including pH, nitrate nitrogen, ammonium nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and salts). Based on test results, applications of limestone, fertilizer, and compost or manure are often suggested. The proper time and rates of application for each nutrient amendment are typically stated. When requested, suggested organic amendments can be provided.

The resulting report should aid in gauging fertilizer applications and in correcting nutrient deficiencies or excesses. The CAES website below contains additional information on interpreting results. Enclosed with your test results will be a special discount coupon from our garden market sponsors which may be presented with your Results Form for spring 2019 fertilizer discounts at Dom’s Garden Center in Danbury, Meadowbrook Gardens, or Scott’s Landscaping and Nursery, both in New Milford.

Soil Sample Transmittal Form
(Please print legibly; attach additional sheet if required)

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
Email: _____

Sample #	Sampling Area Description	Items Grown	Comments
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____

Soil Test Lab Contact Information

Contact Gregory Bugbee at the Slate Laboratory, CT Agricultural Experiment Station by:
Phone - 203/974-8521; **Fax** – 203/974-8502; **Email** – gregory.bugbee@ct.gov
Mail address - CAES – Slate Laboratory, Soil Testing, 123 Huntington St, New Haven, CT 06511
CAES website reference – www.ct.gov/caes