



## Wilson County

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### News and Information from UT-TSU Extension Wilson County

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#### Don't Just Guess.. Get Your Soil Tested

Are you planning to get the most out of your crop this year, be it your garden, your pasture, your hay field, your corn or soybean field? Have you had your soil tested? Soil testing is a valuable step in accomplishing this goal. Soil testing is the only practical means to adequately determine the fertility status in a field in order to prescribe appropriate lime and fertilizer recommendations but the reliability of soil test results depends on the quality of the sample submitted to the soil testing laboratory. Poor sampling can result in inaccurate soil test results and produce unreliable lime and fertilizer recommendations. Some helpful soil sampling information:

- Soil samples can be collected at any time, but some soil properties (soil pH, phosphorus (P), and potassium (K), for example) can vary depending on the time of sampling. Sampling at the same time each year is recommended but if you have not already sampled, soon is a good time.
- Collect sample when soil is moist and shovel or soil probe will easily penetrate the soil. It is best for the soil to be workable rather than so wet it adheres together and will form a ball when worked in the hand.
- Assemble tools: Shovel or soil probe, plastic bucket, plastic zip-lock type bag (s).
- A good rule of thumb for soil sampling is to collect samples in a way that adequately represents the soil in that field. A well represented sample will consist of 10 – 20 core sub-samples taken at the appropriate depth within a 5/10-acre grid. (Smaller areas also need multiple sub-samples)
- Determine area to be sampled and collect an appropriate number of sub-samples. The sub-samples are placed in the plastic bucket and then thoroughly mixed. This makes the composite sample. Save 1-1 1/2 cups of composite sample to be submitted to the lab.
- University of Tennessee Soil, Plant, & Pest Center as well as commercial soil testing laboratories in Tennessee recommend taking soil samples to a depth of 6 inches.
- The frequency of soil testing depends on cropping intensities, soil types, fertilization rate, tillage methods, and weather conditions; however, testing is recommended every two to three years to estimate the residual nutrient levels. For high-value cash crops (corn, soybeans, truck gardens, small fruits, etc) soils should be tested annually.
- While soil test results from University of Tennessee Soil, Plant, & Pest Center come back within 3 to 5 days, it is best to sample well ahead, even months before planting to allow for planning and application of recommended nutrients and/or lime.
- Soil testing is also recommended any time a nutrient deficiency problem is suspected or at the beginning of different crop rotation systems.
- Soil samples and a completed soil information sheet can be taken to your county Extension office for sending to the soil lab.
- Additional information about the UT Soil, Plant & Pest Center can be obtained from your County UT Extension Offices or by visiting <https://ag.tennessee.edu/spp/>.

For more information on any Extension programs, contact the UT-TSU Extension Office in Wilson County at 615-444-9584. You can also find us on Facebook or visit our website: [extension.tennessee.edu/wilson](http://extension.tennessee.edu/wilson)

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