

K-STATE

Research and Extension

Sunflower Extension District #6



April 2023
Newsletter



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Testing your Garden Soil

Most gardeners think soil testing only determines nutrient deficiencies, but the tests also help gardeners understand whether the soil contains adequate nutrients. Basic tests check the soil's pH, and the phosphorus and potassium levels.

K-State horticultural expert Ward Upham urges gardeners to test their garden's soil before beginning spring gardening, particularly if the soil hasn't been tested in several years. To do so, he says, take a sample from multiple locations in the garden and lawn, and which are representative of the soil. Samples should be taken at a depth between the surface and eight inches. Next, mix the samples together to total one pint of soil.

"A soil test determines fertility problems, not other conditions that may exist, such as poor drainage, poor soil structure, soil borne diseases or insects, chemical contaminants or damage," Upham said. "All of these conditions may reduce plant performance but cannot be evaluated by a soil test."

Upham recommends submitting dry soil samples, as wet soil has different precautions. "Wet soil samples should be air-dried before being submitted for testing," Upham said. "Do not use artificial means of drying such as an oven or microwave as such treatment may result in inaccurate readings of nutrient levels."

Soil tests should be used as a tool to identify nutrient deficiencies, Upham said, but often they do not tell the whole story of other factors affecting plant growth.

Reminder: We have Radon Testing Kits, Water Testing Kits, Soil Sampling Probe, Soil Fertility Testing, Hay Sampling Probe, Feed Testing , Seed Germination Testing all in our office. Contact your local Extension Office if you need any of these.