

Guidance note

Soil testing

What is soil tested for?

Soil is tested to check the pH, this is how acid or alkaline it is, and also the levels of essential soil nutrients:

- Sodium
- Nitrogen
- Potassium
- Calcium
- Phosphorous



How is it done?

Take a sample, walking a “W” line in the plot from one corner. Take a little soil from the depth of a garden trowel at each of the 5 points of the “W”, you want to get a total of about 250gms. If your plot is bigger than 8m x 10m, take two samples, walking two “W” lines from different corners.

ANRD can check most of the soil nutrients on site using meters, giving immediate results. Phosphorous can only be detected after a lab test, which takes 3 to 5 days as the soil has to dry out first. Soil can't be tested for plant diseases or rots.

How to correct poor soil

The most essential part is the pH. If this is wrong the plant won't be able to take up nutrients, no matter how much fertilizer you put on.

- To correct acid soil – dig in dolmatic lime
- To correct alkaline soil – dig in calcitic lime (quick fix), or manure or compost (long term solution)
- To correct for lack of soil nutrients – apply fertilizer, selecting a mix rich in the missing element. Longer term restoration is recommended, with application of manure and compost.

Retest your soil after treatment: after 2 – 3 days if applying lime or fertilizer, and 2 - 3 week after applying manure or compost.

For further advice please contact Farmer Support at ANRD on 24724.