

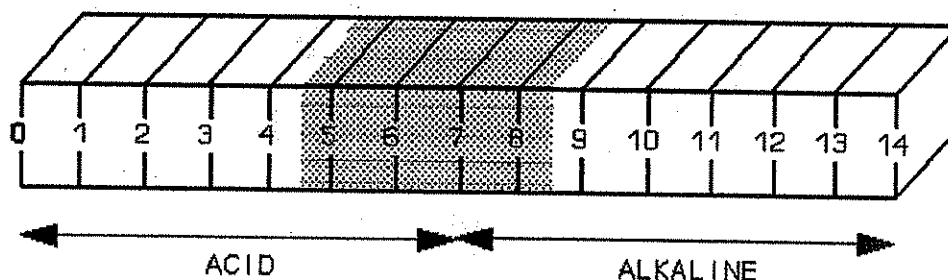
## Soil Sampling for Home Lawns & Gardens

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Soil pH is the most commonly-used index of soil acidity or alkalinity. Soil pH is measured on a scale of from 0 to 14, or from most acidic to most alkaline. (Figure 1.) Certain elements that are essential to plant nutrition are influenced by soil pH so it is important to know your soil pH and the pH preferred by the plants you wish to grow.

**Figure 1.**

### The pH Scale



The Lee County Extension office will test soil pH for free. Bring your sample(s) into the Extension Office at 3406 Palm Beach Blvd. by 5 p.m. on Wednesday. Results will be available when the Horticulture department opens at 9 a.m. Friday. One cup of soil from each area to be tested is needed. Please read the following directions for taking a good soil sample.

#### Taking a good sample

The benefits of a soil test depend on a good sample. The sample should represent the area it is taken from. Otherwise, the results may have little or no value.

- Timing

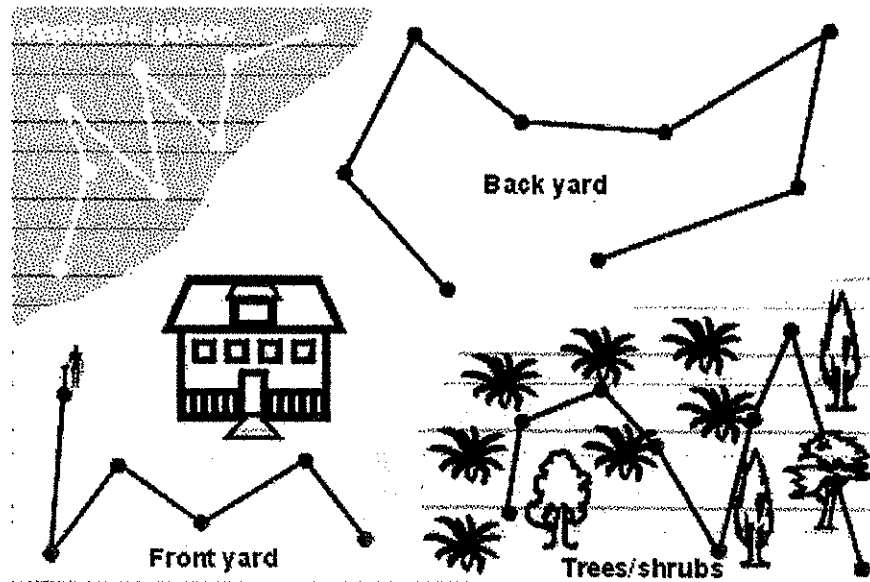
For a flowerbed or vegetable garden, take a soil sample a few months before planting. In that way, you have enough time to adjust the soil before you plant.

Sample established areas—lawns, trees, shrubbery, and other perennials—once every three or four years.

If lime or elemental sulfur have recently been added to the soil, wait at least six to eight weeks before sampling.

- Sample each unique area separately  
For each unique area (lawn, vegetable garden or perennial garden) take six to eight subsamples and combine them to make one sample for that area. (Figure 2.)  
If one area of your yard seems healthy and another has bare or yellow patches, sample healthy and unhealthy areas separately even if both are used for the same kind of planting.

Figure 2. Unique areas to sample in a home landscape



- Take each sample to the appropriate depth  
For lawns, sample to a depth of four inches, excluding any turf thatch.  
For vegetable and flower gardens, sample to a depth of four to six inches.  
For shrubbery, remove any mulch or surface debris, then sample to a depth of four to six inches around the base of plants.
- Mix each sample well  
Place all the subsamples for a unique area in a plastic bucket and mix thoroughly.  
From this mixture, place approximately one cup in a clean container.