

## **General Q&As For Candlewood's 2025 Soil Testing Program**

*[Offering Priority Processing of Candlewood's Soil Samples from April 12 to 26]*

### **What is Candlewood's Soil Testing Program?**

It is an environmental initiative designed to help residents understand the composition and fertility of their soils and suggest ways to enhance soil and plant health while protecting our surroundings, most notably Candlewood Lake and Ball & Squantz Ponds

- The program is offered annually, typically in the Spring, as a community service for all residents of the Candlewood Lake Watershed (and beyond), and is free of charge
- It involves drawing soil samples from one's lawn/garden and mailing them to the Soil Test Lab of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven
- The program is one among several efforts being mounted to engage residents with our environment and build a positive ethic to benefit the quality of the Watershed and its allied waters

### **What's the Program's purpose?**

- To raise awareness of the value of testing one's soil before planting or fertilizing
- To explain and facilitate soil testing procedures and make the sampling process less cumbersome for residents
- To demonstrate the merits of testing and to answer basic questions on lawn/garden fertilization
- To help prevent unnecessary fertilizing, over-fertilizing, or inappropriate fertilizing
- To generate interest in 'everyday-type' voluntary actions residents can take to help protect our environment

### **How does this year's Program differ from that of last year?**

- Last year's program format was termed 'Soil Testing Day' and called for resident collection and local delivery of soil samples on a designated date to sites within the Watershed for subsequent transport to the Test Lab

- This year's expanded format, 'Soil Testing by Mail,' provides increased convenience and flexibility, extends over a two-week period, involves residents mailing samples to the Lab, and expands the program throughout the Candlewood Watershed, a key objective

#### **Why should property owners test their soil?**

- To determine if their lawn or garden requires fertilization
- To determine their soil's current fertility and composition
- To receive expert advice on appropriate fertilization measures (whether to, what type, what combination of nutrients, how much to apply, and when)
- To help ensure appropriate fertilization and avoid damaging environmental outcomes
- To ultimately have a healthier environment while maintaining attractive landscapes

#### **What are the benefits of participating?**

- It's easy – all of the sampling and mailing instructions are provided for you
- It's informative – learn about your soil's composition and fertility needs
- It's valuable – helps guide original planting and ongoing maintenance actions
- It's free, and only requires use of several plastic baggies, postage, and an envelope
- It could save time & money by avoiding unnecessary/inappropriate fertilizing expense
- Importantly, it helps protect our Watershed and our water bodies by promoting informed and customized applications, if and as warranted

#### **What's involved, and why has a two-week period been set aside?**

- There are six simple steps to draw & mail samples, and act on Lab recommendations
  1. Print out and follow the Sampling Instructions (also posted on the CLA web site)
  2. Scoop, mix & insert soil samples into standard zip-lock plastic baggies
  3. Complete the Transmittal Form (pg. 2 of Instructions) 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 the Instructions below
  5. Await results and suggestions by mail directly from the Lab within ~2 weeks
  6. Visit one of our garden center sponsors to fulfill fertilizer needs

- The period from April 12 to 26 has been earmarked by the Test Lab for expedited processing of Candlewood's soil samples so plan to mail your packaged samples by April 26<sup>th</sup> to speed report receipt and your implementation of recommendations

#### **What if I have questions on unique circumstances or fertilizer applications?**

- Check out the CAES web site noted in the Instructions; for further answers, contact Greg Bugbee at CAES in New Haven @ 203/974-8521 (best time to call in spring/fall is on weekdays between 8:30 and 9 AM) or by email @ [gregory.bugbee@ct.gov](mailto:gregory.bugbee@ct.gov)

#### **Who is sponsoring Candlewood's Soil Testing Program?**

- The Candlewood Watershed Initiative (CWI) has taken the lead in launching and managing the Soil Testing Program series since 2008; CWI is a grassroots volunteer team focused on protecting the quality of Candlewood Lake and its Watershed
- CWI is again partnering with the Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA), Friends of Ball Pond, and the CT Agricultural Experiment Station which provides soil testing and fertilizing guidance
- Two Lake-area garden centers – Dom's Garden Center of Danbury, and Scott's Landscaping and Nursery of New Milford – are sponsoring this year's event and providing special discounts on fertilizers for those participating; please make a point to visit and patronize them and extend your thanks for their essential support on behalf of our Lake and Watershed