Sampling Instructions For

Candlewood's 2025 Soil Testing Program

It's smart, free & easy!

Purpose & Overview

Candlewood's Soil Testing Program is provided as a community service to advise residents about their soil's fertility and corresponding fertilizer considerations. It involves taking soil samples from one's lawn &/or garden and mailing those samples to the Soil Test Lab at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven for analysis. Following evaluation, and within ~2 weeks, the Soil Test Lab will then mail a written report back to each participant with results/recommendations specific to their soil's unique composition.

This year's program format, termed 'Soil Testing by Mail,' involves 6 simple steps:

1. Print out and follow these Sampling Instructions
2. Scoop, mix & insert soil samples into standard zip-lock plastic baggies
3. Complete and fold Transmittal Form (pg. 2); insert into a padded mail envelope, together with the baggies containing soil samples
4. Mail envelope to the Test Lab in New Haven per the address Instructions below
5. Await results and suggestions by mail directly from the Lab
6. Visit one of our garden center sponsors to fulfill your fertilizer needs.

This event is intended to raise awareness of the importance of testing one's soil *before* fertilizing to ensure that it is necessary and appropriate to conditions, provides the correct nutrient mix, and is properly applied. The net result will be healthier lawns and gardens and, importantly, a healthier Lake and Watershed environment free of unnecessary or over-applications of fertilizer. Reduced time, effort and fertilizer expenses can likewise be expected.

Sampling Instructions

Use one or more quart-size, zip-lock plastic baggies to securely contain your soil samples. The number of baggies needed depends on the uniformity of your soil and whether you want both your lawn and garden analyzed. For each area to be tested, draw a separate, representative sample by removing narrow slices or 'cores' of soil using a garden trowel or similar tool:

- **For *uniform lawns*** – of ~½ acre of grass, draw ~10 cores; of ~1 acre, draw ~15 cores; lawn cores should be drawn from the upper 4" of soil -- then remove any grass, thatch, or roots
- **For *uniform gardens*** – that are small/typical, draw ~6 cores; for larger gardens, draw ~10 cores; garden cores should be drawn from the upper 6" of soil
- **For *lawn or garden areas that are not uniform*** in their nutrient content, separate representative cores should be drawn from each different area

- **For *unusual or difficult conditions*,** problem areas, or special requirements, contact the Test Lab before drawing samples (see contact info below; note the Lab is not open on weekends).

For each separate area being sampled, thoroughly mix the soil cores together in a bucket to get a uniform sample; then pour this mixture into a plastic baggie until ~½ full. Do likewise with cores from second area using a separate baggie, etc. Ideally these soil samples should be dry; if necessary, moist samples will be accepted. Label each baggie using a Sharpie of similar permanent marker with your last name, sample #, and sampling area description (e.g., *Smith - #1 – Front Lawn*) and make corresponding entries on the Transmittal Form below for each area sampled.

Transmittal Instructions

Complete the following Soil Sample Transmittal Form (if you would prefer organic fertilizer recommendations, so note), run a copy for your records, fold in ½, and insert with the corresponding baggies into a padded mail envelope. Mail the package to the Test Lab at the address noted below.

Soil Test Results

Test results are typically mailed back within ~2 weeks of receipt. Soil samples are tested for texture (sand, loam, clay composition, etc.), organic matter, and nutrients (including pH, nitrate nitrogen, ammonium nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and salts). Based on test results, applications of limestone, fertilizer, and compost or manure are often suggested. The proper time and rates of application for each nutrient amendment are typically stated.

The resulting report should aid in gauging fertilizer applications and in correcting nutrient deficiencies or excesses. The CAES website noted below contains additional information on interpreting results. Enclosed with your test results will be a special discount coupon from our garden market sponsors which may be presented with your Results Form for spring 2025 fertilizer discounts at Dom's Garden Center in Danbury or Scott's Landscaping and Nursery of New Milford.

Soil Sample Transmittal Form - (***Please print legibly***; attach additional sheet if necessary)

Name: _____

Address: _____ **Phone:** _____

_____

_____ **Email**: _____

Sample #	**Sampling Area Description**	**Items Grown**	**Comments**
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____

Soil Test Lab Contact Information

Contact Gregory Bugbee at the Slate Laboratory, CT Agricultural Experiment Station by:

Phone - 203/974-8521; **Fax** – 203/974-8502; **Email** – gregory.bugbee@ct.gov

Mail address - CAES – Slate Laboratory, Soil Testing, 123 Huntington St, New Haven, CT 06511

CAES website reference – www.ct.gov/caes