

Soil Sample Submission Requirements/Guidelines for Homeowner Customers

By following these guidelines, you can avoid frustrating delays and help to ensure that you get your soil test results as quickly as possible.

1. Our routine/predictive soil testing is a service to provide lime and fertilizer recommendations. Our lab does not analyze for pesticides, chemicals, contaminants of any type, insects, or diseases. Please contact private labs for such services or utilize the NC State Plant Disease and Insect Clinic through your Cooperative Extension Service.
2. Diagnostic soil samples will only be given priority service if the diagnostic soil sample information form accompanies samples. The information form (front and back) is to be completed with sufficient information as related to growth issues; otherwise, samples will be processed as predictive samples.
3. Our soil testing service does not offer heavy metals testing to homeowners or community gardeners. Our soil testing methods are designed and used to estimate the soil fertility requirements for crop growth, not to assess risk of potential plant uptake of heavy metals and impact on human health. Private labs can be used for this purpose. Our heavy metals testing service is only approved for sites that are permitted for the land application of septage or other waste products through the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. Information on contaminants in vegetable gardens can be found at <https://gardening.ces.ncsu.edu/soils/soil-contaminants/>.
4. The customer should fill the soil sample box to the red fill line for a sufficient volume for analysis so that all results and recommendations can be received. Do not over fill the box. Do not use tape on the soil sample box.
5. Only soil samples that are composed of at least 50% by volume of native soil should be submitted. Do not submit extensive amounts of turf thatch, mulch, and other materials. Including these may produce inaccurate test results.
6. Compost, manure, potting soil, or soil-less media should not be submitted as soil samples. Soil testing analyses are not appropriate to evaluate these materials. Submit these types of samples to the Plant/Waste/Solution/Media (PWSM) Laboratory.
7. Soil samples are only accepted in soil boxes provided free of charge to clients by the NCDA&CS Agronomic Services Division. Samples submitted in bags from private labs, plastic bags or other containers will not be analyzed; clients will be contacted and asked to resubmit samples.
8. Soil samples submitted without soil sample information forms will not be analyzed; if contact information is provided, clients will be notified to resubmit samples. On-line submission of soil sample information (on-line data entry) is strongly encouraged; if used, a printed copy of the sample information form needs to be submitted along with the soil samples.
9. Soil sample information forms are required to have a valid telephone number and email address. This information is needed to help identify the correct client account and also to contact the client in case there are questions about their submission; if this information is not provided, soil samples will not be analyzed.

10. If a repeat customer knows their six-digit PALS ID, this number should be written on the soil sample information form since it will link their new submission to previously submitted samples. The PALS ID is important because it positively identifies the client's account. This number can be found on any client report.
11. The client will receive an email with a link to their completed soil report posted on our Public Access Laboratory Information Management System (PALS) [PALS - Public Access Laboratory-information-management System \(ncagr.gov\)](https://ncagr.gov). Reports are not routinely mailed to clients.
12. Each soil sample box needs to have an identifying soil sample ID that corresponds to the soil sample ID listed on the soil sample information form. If multiple soil samples are submitted without sample IDs, the analysis will not be completed. The client will be contacted to resubmit samples.
13. Do not submit multiple soil boxes with the same sample ID. If multiple soil boxes with the same sample ID are received, only one will be analyzed, and the others will be discarded.
14. Send samples in a sturdy shipping box with samples tightly packaged to avoid damage. Do not ship soil samples in padded shipping envelopes since they will be damaged in transit.
15. A fee on soil testing (\$4.00 per sample) is charged during **peak-season**, which usually coincides with the dates December 1 – March 31. **Samples must be received prior to peak-season to avoid fees.**
16. The sample "received" date is the date that the soil sample physically reaches the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division's loading dock. The Agronomic Division is not responsible for shipping delays. To avoid "peak season fees," clients are encouraged to ship samples well in advance of the start of our peak season. A private courier to track sample shipping is strongly advised. The received date can also be used to estimate the turnaround time for a sample by using the turnaround time estimator tool on PALS.
17. Reports for soil samples received during the peak-season will not be released until peak-season fees are paid. A check may be submitted with the shipment or payment via credit card may be made via on-line data entry. The Agronomic Division will not be responsible for loss of cash sent inside shippers. Peak-season dates and turnaround times are found at <https://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/pals>.