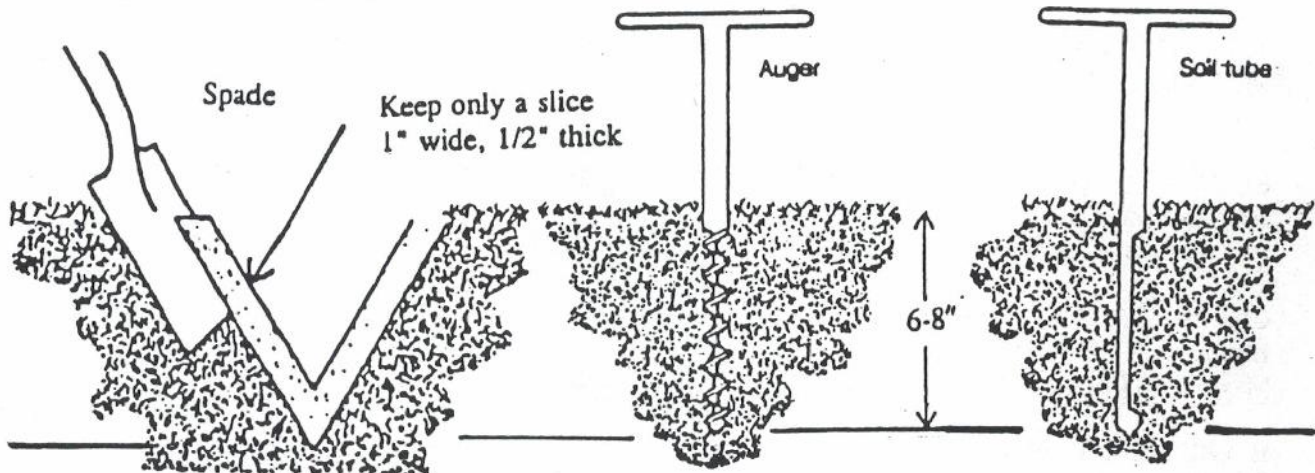




HOW TO OBTAIN A SOIL SAMPLE

The results of soil tests for nutrients and pH are valuable only if the soil sample is REPRESENTATIVE of the soil layers from which the plants draw their nutrients. It is essential to obtain uniform slices or cores of soil from the top to the proper depth. A spade, an auger or a special soil sampling tube can be used. (see figure)



To properly obtain a soil sample for testing, select 8 to 10 spots in the garden or the lawn (subsamples) and follow these steps:

- Scrape away any debris, mulch and 1/2 to 1" of the surface layer.
- Take a slice(core) of soil all the way down to 8"-10" from each of these spots.
- Mix these soil subsamples together and spread the mixed soil evenly on a clean surface to AIR DRY. (It takes 2-4 days for an 1" thick layer of non-muddy soil to dry out depending on air humidity and circulation.)
- Mix the dried soil again and remove any remaining debris or stones. (If possible grind it to pass a 2 mm sieve. Try not to handle the sample with your hands.)
- Save only about ONE CUP of the dried soil in a clean, not metal or galvanized, container like a plastic bag or jar and label the container (not the lid) with your name and the area you took the sample.
- Bring the labeled sample(s) to the Cooperative Extension office in East Aurora, 21 S. Grove Street, Suite 240. A nominal fee is charged for each sample.
- **OR** attend one of our clinics.

Twice a year, spring and fall, the Erie County Master Gardeners of Cornell Cooperative Extension offer soil tests, for pH only, **free of charge (no more than 3 samples per household please)** in several locations, **listed on the back of this page.**

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