



MSU Extension Soil  
Testing Program Team  
[MSUsoiltest@msu.edu](mailto:MSUsoiltest@msu.edu)

877-643-9887

Home Lawn and  
Garden Hotline

888-678-3464 option 1

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## Soil Test Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Why did the MSU Soil and Plant Nutrient Lab (SPNL) Close?**

A. To ensure that the soil samples that were analyzed met with research and industry standards, the MSU Soil and Plant Nutrient Lab needed to update its equipment. It was determined that it would not be a cost-effective endeavor to purchase new equipment while staying competitive with industry laboratories.

**Q. Who tests the soil?**

A. MSU Extension has partnered with A&L Great Lakes Laboratories, Inc., in Fort Wayne, IN for soil analysis.

**Q. What soil sample test should I get?**

A. For testing soil in home landscapes and home gardens, purchase the Home Lawn and Garden Soil Test Self-Mailer. For all other applications, including agriculture, wildlife food plots, and commercial turf, purchase the Commercial bags.

**Q. What are the costs?**

A. The Home and Garden Soil Test Self-Mailer costs \$26.00 per sample. The Commercial bags cost \$18.00 per sample.

**Q: How long will it take to get my test results back?**

A: Results will be made available within 14 business days. Both commercial and home lawn and garden test results will be emailed to the client. Please check your SPAM folder.

**Q. Why is there a cost difference?**

A. The Home and Garden Soil Test Self-Mailer includes postage and packaging to send the sample to A&L Laboratories. The client pays postage when sending in Commercial samples.



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**Q. Why should I use the MSU Extension soil sample program and not send my samples directly to the lab?**

A. Our nutrient recommendations use the latest research from Michigan State University and other reputable research institutions. Michigan has regulations and laws to protect our water quality. These recommendations closely follow applicable state regulations as well as [Generally Accepted Management Practices \(GAAMPs\)](#) outlined in the [Michigan Right to Farm](#) program. Commercial labs cannot provide MSU recommendations for most crops.

**Q. Where do I get the soil sample bags or self-mailers?**

A. Lawn and Garden Self-Mailers and the Commercial bags can be purchased at any MSU Extension Office throughout the state. Lawn and Garden Self-Mailers can also be purchased at the MSU Bookstore, [shop.msu.edu](http://shop.msu.edu).

**Q. What is analyzed in a soil sample?**

A. For both the Lawn and Garden Self-Mailers and the Commercial bags, soil samples are analyzed for: Organic Matter, Available Phosphorus, Exchangeable Potassium, Magnesium, Calcium, Soil pH, Buffer pH, Cation Exchange Capacity, and Percent Base Saturation of Cation Elements. We do not test for contaminants. Tests for additional nutrients can be purchased for the commercial soil test only. Please ask your local MSU Extension Office for the list of nutrients and pricing.

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