

Organic Media Sampling Instructions

Taking a representative sample for testing is a critical process for accurate evaluation and appropriate recommendations. Please follow these directions carefully.

Sampling Instructions for Greenhouse Crops

1. Growing media should be tested every 4 weeks during the growing season. Samples should be taken just **before** weekly fertilization.
2. Each sample should represent only one bed (one crop) in one greenhouse. Where poor growth exists, sample separately both good and bad areas (2 samples) for comparison of soil test results.
3. From the areas between growing plants, use hand or trowel to obtain growing mix from top 1/3, middle 1/3, and bottom 1/3 of bed. Sample should be representative of growing mix from top to bottom of bed. Place this subsample in clean bucket.
4. For each sample to be submitted for testing, repeat subsampling from 15-20 places in the bed. All subsamples can be added to the clean bucket.
5. When 15 to 20 subsamples have been obtained, mix thoroughly in the bucket.

Sampling Instructions for Compost -

1. For small-scale piles or containers, mix compost thoroughly before sampling to eliminate layering within the pile/container. Take 5-10 subsamples from various locations in the pile.
Or,
 1. For large-scale turned windrows and mixed piles, sample immediately after turning. Take quart-sized subsamples from edge of the pile by digging 1-2 feet into the pile. The appropriate number of subsamples depends on size of pile and uniformity of compost; 10-15 subsamples may be adequate.
Or,
 1. For large-scale static piles, dig out a section of compost to expose a cross-section of the pile. Take subsamples at various depths from the cross-section. Repeat at multiple locations in the pile. The appropriate number of subsamples depends on size of pile and uniformity of compost; 20-30 subsamples may suffice.
2. Combine subsamples in a clean 5-gallon bucket. Mix subsamples together thoroughly.

Sending Samples

1. Fill a quart-sized plastic bag with composite sample to ensure that there is sufficient sample for testing. Squeeze out excess air and close securely with twist-tie, rubberband, or zip/seal. Also tape or double-bag to ensure the bag will not open during shipping. Label the bag with permanent marker.
2. Complete a questionnaire for each sample. The sample ID that you provide on the questionnaire should match the label given on the bag. Attach payment or fill in credit card information.
3. Place the sample, the questionnaire, and payment in a padded mailer or small box or cooler. To minimize microbial activity, which could alter test results, the sample should be cooled and sent immediately using express delivery. Send to the lab using the address above.