

Now Is a Good Time to Do Soil Testing *Submitted by Laura Paine, Agriculture Agent*

Soil sampling can be done any time of the year, but many farmers find it convenient to take samples in the fall after completing harvest. We recommend that you sample fields in 5 to 10 acre sections. To get an accurate representation of soil fertility in each section, take 10 to 20 cores in a zig-zag pattern across the field and mix them together in a bucket. The cores should be as deep as your plow layer. Take a subsample of about a cup to be analyzed and discard the rest.

The UW Soils Lab provides soil analysis through the Columbia County Extension office for \$7.00 per sample. You can obtain soil sample bags and borrow a soil probe from the office. We can also help with interpreting results and developing a nutrient management plan. Due to budget cuts, we're no longer able to cover the postage costs for shipping the samples to the Madison lab. Instead, we provide pre-addressed priority mail boxes and you can mail the samples yourself from the most convenient post office.

It's a good idea to sample your soils every 3 to 4 years, whether or not you're working on a nutrient management plan. The soil is the foundation of your production system and maintaining proper fertility and pH levels is key to healthy, profitable crops. For more information, contact Laura Paine at 608/742-9682 or laura.paine@ces.uwex.edu. <<mailto:laura.paine@ces.uwex.edu>>