

Compost Testing

The University of Massachusetts Soil & Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory offers the following test options for compost.

The **Standard Compost Test** provides:

- Moisture Content
- Bulk Density
- pH
- Soluble Salts
- Available Plant Nutrients
- Extractable Heavy Metals
- Total Nitrogen
- Organic Matter
- Carbon/Nitrogen Ratio.

Also offered:

- **Total** Nutrient and Heavy Metal Analysis

Why Test?

- to improve the soil's nutritional balance
- to help assess product stability
- to judge best use for compost
- to aid in the diagnosis of plant culture problems.
- to modify future composting plans
- to identify composts contaminated with heavy metals.

A compost test can be a valuable tool in assessing and preventing horticultural, agronomic, and some environmental problems. The tests listed above **do not** identify plant growth problems associated with soil drainage, insects, plant diseases (whether soil-borne or not), weeds, winter injury and the misuse of pesticides.

The University of Massachusetts Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory also offers nutrient and heavy metal testing of soils, plant tissue and soil amendments.

UMass Extension Newsletters

Hort Notes... for professional landscapers and grounds managers; alerts reader to emerging landscape pests and timely plant health care problems; Bi-weekly from March through October; \$20.00/year; check payable to UMass; Send to: Hort Notes, French Hall, 230 Stockbridge Road, UMass, Amherst, MA 01003.

Floriculture Information... Visit their website: www.umass.edu/umext/programs/agro/floriculture/publications.html

Vegetable Information... Visit their website: www.umassvegetable.org/newsletters/

Turf Information... Visit the website: www.umasssturf.org/

Tree and Small Fruit Information... Visit their website: www.umass.edu/fruitadvisor/

Crops, Dairy, Livestock News... covers topics in crops, feeds, and nutrient management; published quarterly; for subscription information contact Steve Herbert, (413)545-2250.



UMassAmherst



Compost Testing



West Experiment Station

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Order Form

Please complete the questionnaire below.

Sample Information

If more than one sample is submitted, **please label** each sample on the **outside** of bag.

Sample ID: _____

Starting Materials: _____

Compost Age: _____

Composting Method: _____

Intended Use: _____

Compost Sample	Test Requested	Fee
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#1	A B	_____
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#2	A B	_____
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TOTAL		_____
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Comments: _____

Fill in the following:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Date: _____

If additional samples are submitted please enclose a note providing the information requested above or request additional forms. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Ordering Information

How to Order

Fill out the order form and return it with sample(s). **A fee for each must be enclosed.**

Test		Fee
A	Standard Compost Test	\$30.00

(includes Moisture Content, Bulk Density, pH, Soluble Salts, Available Plant Nutrients, Extractable Heavy Metals, Total Nitrogen, Organic Matter, and Carbon-Nitrogen Ratio)

B	Total Nutrients and Metals	\$25.00
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(includes Total Nutrient and Metal Content in dry-ashed compost sample, it does NOT include Nitrogen)

Where to Send Order

Please return the completed order form with your compost sample(s) and a check made payable to **University of Massachusetts** to:

Soil Testing Lab
West Experiment Station
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

For more information, call the Soil Testing Lab at (413) 545-2311.

Web: <http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest>



COMPOST Sampling Instructions

- Inspect the pile or row for consistency. Do not mix composted materials in obviously different stages of degrees of breakdown.
- Each sample submitted for testing should be a **composite** or mixture of 6 to 12 subsamples taken from equally spaced locations in the pile.

Procedure

1. From each subsampling location obtain a small spade full from 15 inches beneath the pile surface.
2. Place the material in a large clean container (e.g. a 5 gallon plastic bucket) and mix thoroughly.
3. Place one quart of the mixture into a zip-lock plastic bag. Seal the bag and label it clearly on the outside.
4. Complete this questionnaire.
5. Transport the sample (along with payment and the completed questionnaire) to the lab without delay. Otherwise store the sample frozen until delivery is possible.