

SOIL TESTING



Toledo GROWs Best Practices—Building a Garden

Soil testing is a must for your garden

- Urban soils have a high probability of heavy metal contaminants and nutrient deficiencies.
- Lead, in particular, can be prevalent and problematic in urban soil due to leaching of old lead paint and piping from existing and demolished buildings and accumulation of lead dust in the soil from nearby industries.
- Gardening in contaminated soil can pose a health threat to children, pregnant women, those with a weak immune system, and those who work in the soil on a regular basis.

Lead/heavy metals exposure in the garden can occur when

- Touching the mouth, eyes, or nose transfers contaminated soil from hands
- Eating unwashed vegetables and fruits harvested by hands covered in soil
- Tilling, digging, and weeding creates contaminated dust which is inhaled and can also coat fruits and vegetables growing in the garden
- Contaminated soil on shoes and clothing is tracked into cars, homes, or workplaces. Kids and pets play with toys on the floor and put things in their mouths from the floor.

Lead/heavy metals and garden produce

Lead and other heavy metals have been detected in the stems and leaves of garden plants, but not in the vegetables or fruits themselves. Do not plant the following in soil where high levels of heavy metals exist:

- Leafy greens (collards, mustard greens, spinach, lettuce, kale, etc.)
- Herbs, edible weeds, or other plants from which the leaves and stems are eaten
- Root crop vegetables or their edible leafy tops

Soil testing forms and instructions

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is a reliable, affordable choice for soil testing.

- Use this link to access the [University of Massachusetts Routine Soil Testing for Home Grounds and Gardening Form](#).
- Print and fill out the form
- Follow the [Soil Sampling Instructions](#)
- Send the forms, the soil sample, and payment to the listed address

The test results will report:

- Soil nutrient levels and deficiencies
- How to amend/improve the soil
- Heavy Metal soil contaminant levels (lead, aluminum, etc.)

If there are high levels of lead, grow produce in raised beds 20 to 24 inches high. Mulch or leave the pathways grassed to avoid disturbing the contaminated soil.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services

Toledo GROWs
900 Oneida St.
Toledo, OH 43608

(419) 720-8714

Visit us on the web at
www.toledogrows.org