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**Easy Does It with the Fertilizer!
Follow this step-by-step soil test guide from askHRgreen.org**

(Hampton Roads, Va., March 26, 2019) – Warmer temps and longer days mean, you guessed it, more time outside! The weeks ahead are prime time for clearing out fallen leaves, removing branches, sharpening tools and assessing your lawn maintenance plans. Instead of reaching for the same bag of “weed and feed” as last year, askHRgreen.org advises testing your soil first to see exactly what nutrients your yard and bedding areas will need.

“Testing your soil is the most important spring lawn care task of all,” said Rebekah Eastep, an askHRgreen.org team leader. “You may think your lawn requires the same fertilizer application as last season, but that’s not always the case. By using a simple soil test kit, you can be confident in applying the right feeding mix, while avoiding the harmful effects of over-fertilizing.”

Applying more nitrogen and phosphorous than your lawn can absorb results in a toxic runoff when it rains, washing the chemicals off of the lawn and into streets, storm drains and waterways. The potent mix contributes to “dead zones,” or areas with low oxygen levels, that can suffocate sea life, activate algae bloom growth and cause a pungent stink.

Getting a soil test takes the guesswork out of what nutrients, if any, you should apply to your lawn and garden, while creating a healthy soil environment for grass, plants and trees.

If you’ve never tested your soil before, don’t sweat it, advised Eastep. “It’s really easy when you follow our [step-by-step soil test guide](#).”

- **Gather Your Tools** – Pick up a soil test kit at a garden store or local Virginia Cooperative Extension office. You'll also need a chrome-plated garden spade (brass, bronze or galvanized tools may contaminate samples with copper and/or zinc) and a clean plastic bucket or container.
- **Dig in the Dirt** – Using the spade, dig a hole in your yard or garden area, then remove “clean” plugs (no grass, litter or rocks) that measure 2-4 inches deep for lawns, vegetable and flower beds, and 6-8 inches for trees and shrubs. Place the plugs in the clean container.
- **Create a Composite Sample** – Take 10 additional soil sub-sample plugs from different locations in your landscape area to make a composite sample, and place these in the same container.
- **Mix it Up** – Thoroughly mix the sub-samples together. Break up clumps and remove any roots or stalks.
- **Mail** – Send your composite sample to the soil testing lab and wait for the results, which will tell you exactly what nutrients to add and how often.

Fun Stuff from askHRgreen.org!

To help jump-start your lawn maintenance, askHRgreen.org is giving away 50 goodie bags containing a soil test kit and other cool green stuff. To enter, go to <https://www.facebook.com/askHRgreen> and show how you feel about getting your yard ready for spring by posting a meme or GIF to our giveaway post. Fifty winners will be chosen from among those who post.

askHRgreen.org is a region-wide public awareness and education campaign administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, of which Gloucester County is a member. Like askHRgreen.org on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and catch the “Let’s Talk Green” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.