

How to Take a Soil Sample

It looks like (fingers crossed) spring is here to stay!

With so much activity going on in the garden,

It's a great time to do some soil testing.

This is something I've heard about for years,

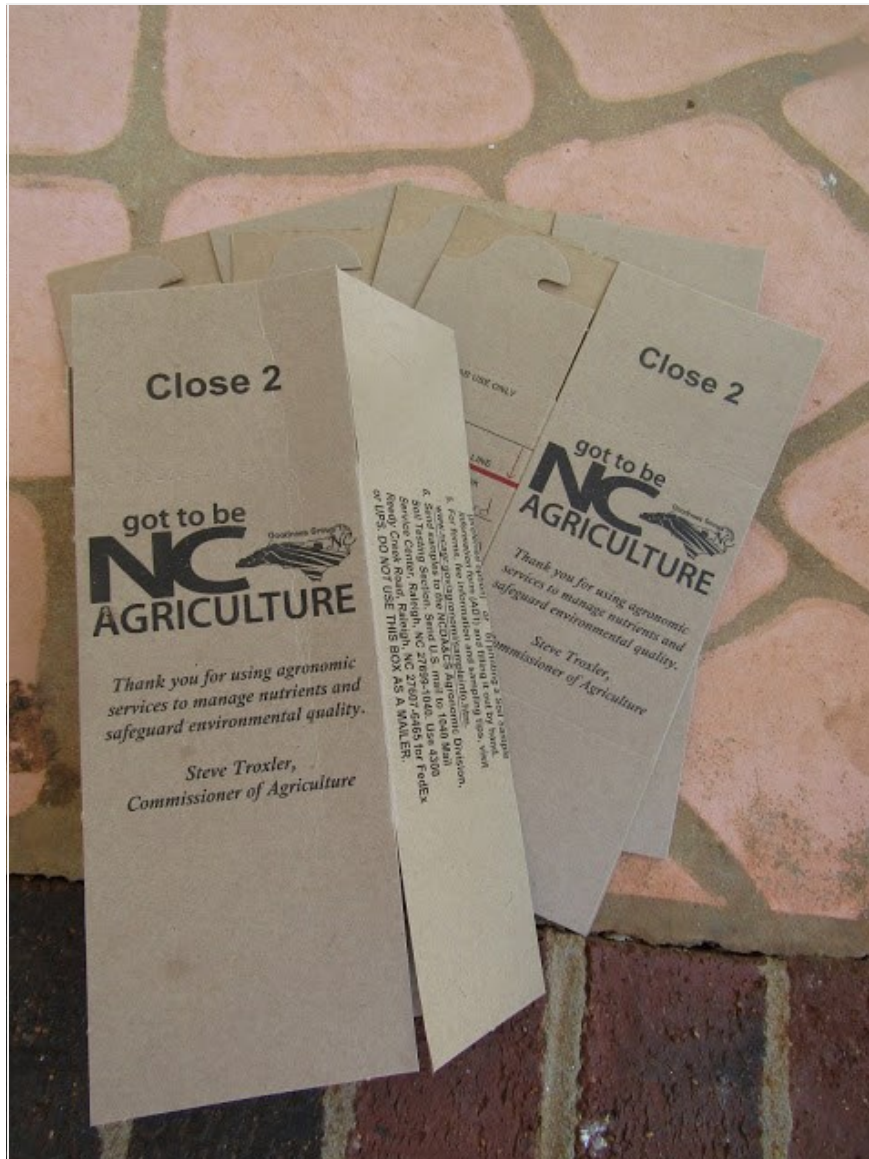
But never took the time to get it done.

Having been in our home less than a year,

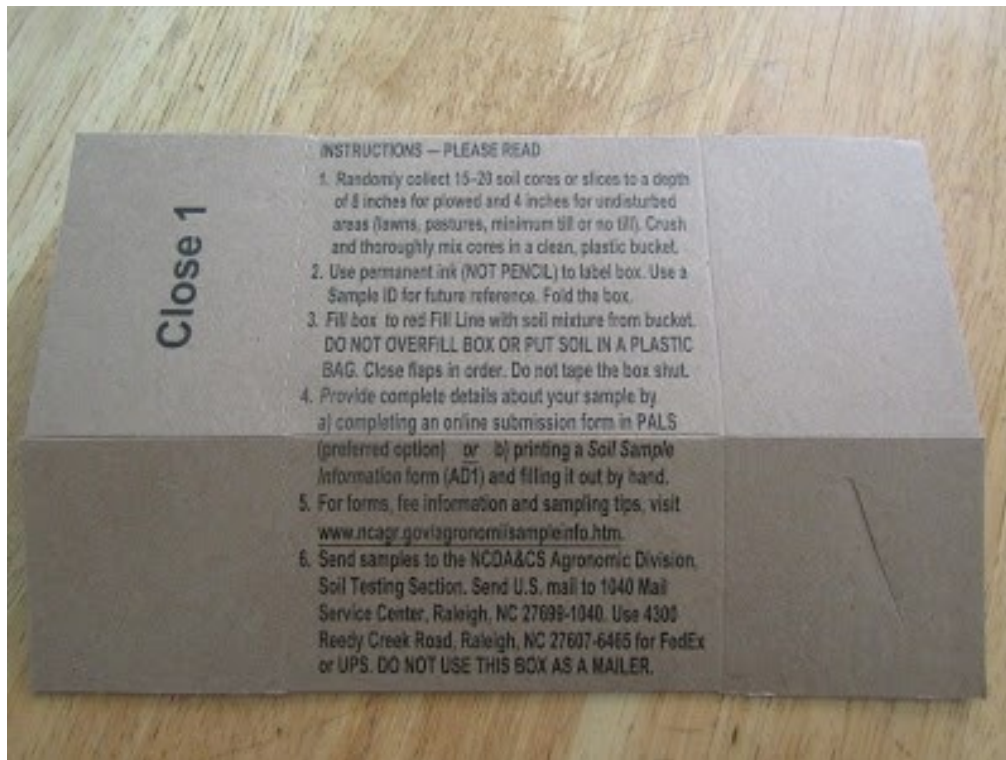
It seemed like the perfect time to start fresh

And see what the soil around our property needs

For better results in our flower and veggie beds and in the turf grass.

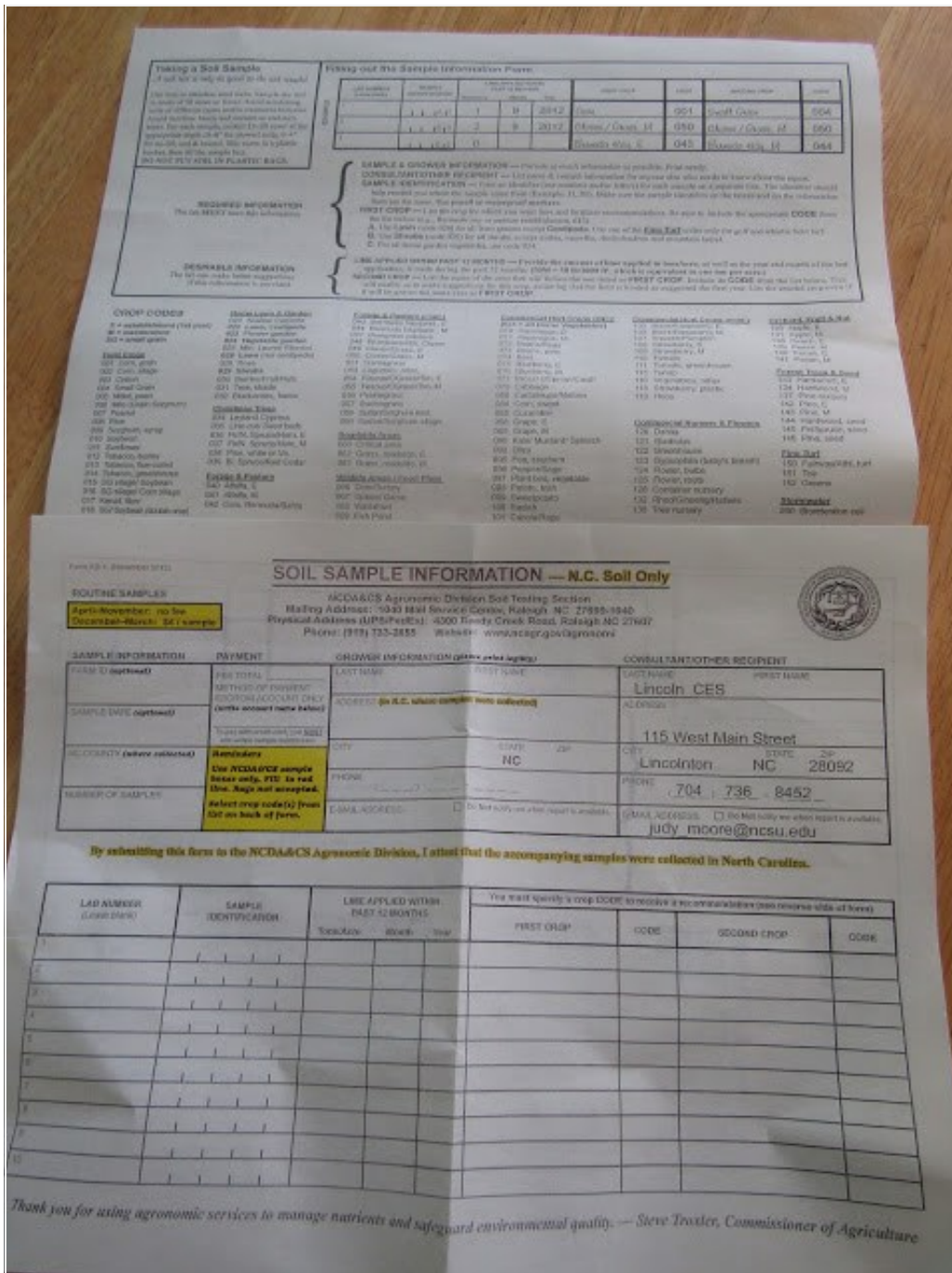


Everything you need to take the sample(s)
Can be collected at your local Cooperative Extension office.
You can find your local Extension office by searching on your county's web
page. Here is our local Extension office page.
These boxes can be acquired for the asking,
and are the containers in which you will place your sample(s).



Directions can be found right on the box!

There is a side panel that needs to be filled out with your name
and contact information,
so that the results can be relayed to you via email.
Each separate area requires a different box.



You'll also need to fill out a sheet similar to this one.

This is the front and back of the form, so you can see what it looks like.

Don't let all the text intimidate you, it's fairly easy to fill out.

And if you're not sure you are doing it correctly, just call your local Extension Agent and they can walk you through the process.

Form AD-1 (November 2013)

SOIL SAMPLE INFORMATION — N.C. Soil Only

N.C.D.A. & C.S. Agronomic Division Soil Testing Section
 Mailing Address: 1040 Mail Service Center, Raleigh NC 27699-1040
 Physical Address (UPS/FedEx): 4300 Reedy Creek Road, Raleigh NC 27607
 Phone: (919) 733-2655 Website: www.ncagr.gov/agronomi

ROUTINE SAMPLES
 April–November: no fee
 December–March: \$4 / sample

SAMPLE INFORMATION	PAYMENT	GROWER INFORMATION (please print legibly)		CONSULTANT/OTHER RECIPIENT
FARM ID (optional)	FEE TOTAL	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME
SAMPLE DATE (optional)	METHOD OF PAYMENT ESCROW ACCOUNT ONLY (write account name below)	ADDRESS (in N.C. where samples were collected)		FIRST NAME
NC COUNTY (where collected)	To pay with credit card, you MUST use online sample submission.	CITY	STATE	ADDRESS
NUMBER OF SAMPLES	Reminders Use N.C.D.A. & C.S. sample boxes only. Fill to red line. Bags not accepted. Select crop code(s) from list on back of form.	PHONE	ZIP	115 West Main Street
		E-MAIL ADDRESS		CITY
				Lincolnton NC 28091
				PHONE (704) 736-8452
				E-MAIL ADDRESS judy.moore@ncsu.edu

By submitting this form to the N.C.D.A. & C.S. Agronomic Division, I attest that the accompanying samples were collected in North Carolina.

LAB NUMBER (Leave blank)	SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION	LIME APPLIED WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS			You must specify a crop CODE to receive a recommendation (see reverse side of form)		
		Tons/Acre	Month	Year	FIRST CROP	CODE	SECOND CROP
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

The information sheet (that gets handed in with your sample(s)), contains things like your contact information,

What type of samples were taken (flower beds, veggie beds, lawn) and your local Extension information should already be pre-printed on the page.

Crop codes for the type of samples can be found on the back page.

This simply helps determine what kind of crop is in this location.

Blueberries, veggies, and roses all need different conditions, so it's important to make the distinction.

“Sample identification” is a self-determined abbreviation for the area being sampled.

For example, for my flower beds, I used the code FLBED.

I completed samples for our lawn, a future veggie bed, flower beds, the back wooded area of our property, and the SW portion of our driveway so I included my own abbreviation for each area.



The Extension Center is all about supporting the gardener. They can provide you with printed material to make the process easier. Information can also be found online on their website.



Here's how I completed my soil sample.

I chose a day when it hadn't rained in a while,

Because I wanted the "plugs" I removed to be easily mixed.

The idea is to take 10-15 core samples, from 4-6 inches in depth within one area, and mix them together in a clean container to incorporate a fair sample of that spot.



Once you have blended your "plugs", place the mixture into the designated box, and fill up to the pre-determined line.



Once you have all of your samples ready to go, simply take them into your local Extension office with your information sheet and wait for your results in your email box.

At this time of the year, soil testing is done free of charge. Once you get your results back, you can determine what amendments might need to be added to improve your soil for the next growing season. Testing can be done every few years and each time it is undertaken, it improves your soil and brings you that much closer to *soil nirvana*.

I'm looking forward to getting the results for our samples.

There are so many gardening projects that I have bouncing around in my head, and this is the first step to bringing them to fruition.

Have you done soil sampling in your garden?