



Manage your soil's health by testing its many properties.

BY: JESSICA WALLISER

# TESTING CHART

Soil Test	What It Measures	When to Do It	Why Do It
<b>Soluble Salt Level</b>	Amount of salt dissolved in soil water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you live in areas where road salt and salt-based de-icing products are used</li> <li>• If you are converting from conventional chemical fertilizers (high in soluble salts) to organic methods</li> </ul>	High soluble salt levels in your soil can reduce water uptake by plants, limit root growth, affect yields and flowering, and burn foliage. Salt problems are usually the result of over-fertilization, both in quantity and proximity to plant roots.
<b>Micronutrients (or trace nutrients)</b>	Levels of copper, boron, zinc, iron, molybdenum and manganese	If you notice nutrient deficiency symptoms (distorted new growth, chlorosis, limited plant growth and yield, discolored foliage, et cetera), but a traditional soil test indicates that macronutrient levels are appropriate	Micronutrients are essential to plant growth, but are used in very small quantities.
<b>Soil Textural Class</b>	Ratio of sand, silt and clay particles	If you are a new farmer or a farmer moving to a new area	It is a good indicator of potential soil issues and challenges. (i.e. Sandy soils leach nutrients and may have nutrient deficiencies. Clay soils are poorly drained and may cause aeration problems.) You cannot change your soil's texture, but knowing the results of this test will help you learn how to properly manage your soil and build good structure.
<b>Compost Testing</b>	Maturity index, carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, extractable nutrients, heavy metal content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before application, if you make large amounts of compost on your farm</li> <li>• If you are unsure of the compost's maturity level (Unfinished compost can temporarily rob certain nutrients from the soil.)</li> <li>• If some of the compost ingredients were from construction or demolition wastes</li> <li>• If the amount of carbon-based ingredients was not in a proper ratio with the nitrogen-based ingredients</li> </ul>	Homemade compost can have nutritional imbalances, high levels of soluble salts and other issues.