

# HENDERSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (HCMG)



TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

## WEEKLY NEWS ARTICLE

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### Have You Taken a Soil Test Lately?

By Lydia Holley

Can you tell how much nitrogen is in your soil? Do you know just by looking if your soil has too much phosphorous? Of course not. That is why you need a soil test. If you are adding fertilizers without testing first, you are possibly wasting money on fertilizers. Even worse, you may be doing harm to your plants by providing either inadequate or excessive amounts of certain nutrients.

A soil test is simple to do. First, get the soil test bag and direction sheet from the Ag Office (Third floor of the Henderson County Courthouse). Take several trowels' worth of soil around your garden, mix them together, and fill the bag. The sheet will ask what you are growing to be able to provide accurate information. The results will be emailed to you.



For many, this is when they become confused. The results are individualized, so the confusion comes in picking out a fertilizer that meets your needs. Luckily for you, Texas A&M has made it easy. At the bottom of your soil report, there will be a website listed. There are several calculators on that website.

By clicking on "Urban Fertilizer Calculator - Basic edition, Single Fertilizer Entry", you can input the results from your soil test. If you have a fertilizer you usually use, you may also input the values of your fertilizer to get the amount in pounds of fertilizer to use. However, you need to read the results below the fertilizer numbers to make certain this particular fertilizer meets your needs. It is best not to over-apply fertilizers, especially Phosphorus which moves very slowly in the soil.

The second link, "Urban Fertilizer Calculator - Commonly Available Fertilizer and Single Fertilizer Entry" allows you to choose from a list of fertilizers generally sold in stores. This allows you to determine which fertilizer would most closely suit your needs.

Be aware that most fertilizers will not match your soil's needs perfectly. It is best to take a soil test, add a fertilizer which best matches your needs without over-application, wait another year or two, and start the process again. Your fertilizer needs will change from year to year since nutrients are used at different rates. It may take several years for your soil to reach optimum results.

By taking a soil test now, before you apply fertilizers, you can rest assured that you are giving the soil, and your plants, nutrients in proper amounts.

*For more information, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com), or visit [txmq.org/hendersonmq](http://txmq.org/hendersonmq).*