

HAVE YOUR SOIL TESTED FOR LEAD - BRING IT TO THE 2U PLANT EXCHANGE

HOW TO TAKE A SOIL SAMPLE:

Sample soil by taking 6 to 12 sub-samples from the area of concern. For play areas, sample to the depth to which the child has been exposed, usually one half to one inch depth. For garden soils, the sampling depth should be from the surface 3 to 4 inches. Lead does not move to any great extent in soils and unless mixing occurs, it generally stays concentrated near the surface. Mix the sub-samples thoroughly in a clean plastic pail, remove about one cup, and bring to the Plant Exchange in a clean container, a plastic bag will work. You must fill out the Lead Chain Custody form, available below or at the Plant Exchange. They charge \$18.00 per lead test and will get you the results to your test in 5 days. Please add \$5.00 for delivery (proceeds go to 2U). Results will be mailed or emailed as you request.

ARTICLE: IS YOUR SOIL SAFE?

from: Chicago Gardening Examiner Jaime Zaplatosch

It certainly comes to no surprise to us that those of us living in and around Chicago reside in an urban environment. While that means that we have access to good public transportation systems and ample supplies for all of our wants nearby, it also means that we have some other issues that we have to acknowledge and deal with. I was leading a group of teachers yesterday in a soil sampling exercise and they were mighty surprised to hear what I had to say.

I was not delving into the results of a typical soil test - nutrients, pH level, etc. I was discussing testing for toxins - specifically lead (a heavy metal). If you live in our area, chances are that you should be testing for lead. Lead is considered an indicator metal (meaning that if it is present at high amounts, you may have other types of contamination) and is a neurotoxin. Metals such as lead are usually taken in by ingestion or inhalation. Anyone who is out in a garden on a hot, windy day knows that "dirt" is often blowing around and we end up breathing it in and it covers our food. Children are the most affected by these contaminants, which affect physical development and our brains. We usually think what we grow at home to eat is healthy, but it may not be. In order to know for sure, get your soil tested.

WHAT DO THE RESULTS MEAN? When reading your lead test results, they will be listed in parts per million (ppm) or mg/kg:
0-35 ppm the natural level of lead found in soil
75 ppm the Canadian maximum level of lead in the soil that adults or children eat produce from
100 ppm the EPA established maximum amount of

lead in soil that youth should be eating produce from
400 ppm the EPA established maximum amount of lead in soil that adults should be eating produce from
400 ppm+ toxic for adults and children - soil should not be gardened directly in

WHAT TO DO Ok, so say your results come back looking something like mine did - at 1100 ppm (off the charts if you look at what the EPA has to say). Do you stop gardening all together and cover your backyard in concrete? Heck no!

Here is what you can do about contaminated soil...

- Install raised beds to raise vegetables (adding new soil and a lining between the old and new soil)
- Grow perennials only
- Add a protective layer of mulch, stone or grass that will limit dusting of soil (for inhalation)
- Clean body, clothing and shoes to ensure that lead particles from the soil are not brought into the home or school
- Add compost or other organic material (which bind heavy metals like lead and keep them from moving)
- Cap the soil with clay
- Remove the soil (an expensive venture as you must responsibly dispose of the contaminated soil in hazardous waste site)

There is a lot to learn about lead in your soil. It is important to be informed and garden safely. Then we can know that the food that we are eating, growing, and sharing with our neighbors really is good for us!