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Does your soil pass the test?

How well do you know your soil? It's an important question for the health of the plants in your garden. Good soil does more than provide a foundation for roots to grab on to. It has good structure, the right pH balance, and provides the right amount of nutrients for the kind of plants you're trying to grow.

Soil Structure

Poorly structured soil inhibits plant growth in a number of ways. Clay soils will compact easily, drain poorly, prevent air from getting to the roots, and dry into hard clumps. Sandy soil will drain too quickly, erode easily and have difficulty holding nutrients for the plants to use. Good soil strikes a balance between these two extremes.

Both clay and sandy soil will benefit from liberal applications of compost and organic matter. Mark Cullen, one of Canada's leading gardening experts, recommends improving your garden soil by mixing in C-I-L Triple Mix Plus. "The mixture of manure, peat, loam, and added fertilizer does wonders for my garden soil."

Soil pH Levels

Acidity or alkalinity in the soil is measured by pH values, on a scale of 1 (most acid) to 14 (most alkaline) with a level of 7 considered "neutral".

The pH level influences the availability of nutrients for you plants, as well as the type of plants you can grow. Most plants will grow well in a pH range of 6.5 to 7.2. Soil that is too acidic can be neutralized by adding Dolomitic lime. Alkaline soils can be neutralized by adding peat moss or small amounts of aluminium sulphate, available at most garden centres.



Soil Nutrients

All plants need a good balance of the major nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium), as well as minor nutrients such as sulphur, iron, calcium, and many others in minute quantities. You can test your soil for the presence of these nutrients and add those that are needed in the form of fertilizer.

The easiest way to test both the pH and the fertility of your soil is to use the C-I-L Soil Test Kit. This inexpensive kit tests both soil fertility and pH to determine the current growing condition of your soil and recommends corrective treatments. You can enter your test data on the C-I-L website to create instant, easy to understand treatment recommendations. For more information, visit www.soiltest.ca.

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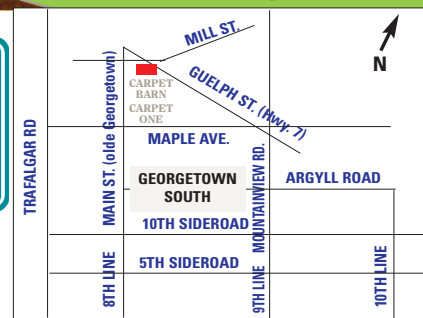
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