

SOIL ANALYSIS

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Before making any major decisions about crops, you need to have your soil analyzed for its chemical properties. Many foothill soils are clay or decomposed granite and fairly acidic. At lower elevations, there are more neutral and slightly alkaline soils. For most crops, a slightly acidic soil is fine, but some crops may require a soil more or less acidic than yours, which can require major inputs of amendments.

You need to have your soil tested by a commercial lab that will give you accurate information for a baseline. Your amendment and fertilizer program will depend on the results of your soil tests, so in order to avoid costly errors, it is best to use a commercial lab rather than home soil test kits. UC Cooperative Extension does not do soil testing.

Soil labs often have a specific protocol they want you to use for sampling your soil, so call and ask before sending off samples. Focus on sampling

the areas that you intend to plant. Generally, you will sample an area several times and mix the samples. If some areas of your property have visibly different soil or vegetation, you may need to do separate soil samples. If so, do not mix the samples, it may give you misleading information.

You will need a range of lab tests to provide a baseline for soil management. Most labs have a basic package which is fine to start. Have your soil analyzed for pH (acidity or alkalinity), and soil nutrient status (N,P, K at a minimum). You will want to know CEC (Cation Exchange Capacity), a measure of native fertility, organic matter, ppm of Ca, Mg, K, and Na (base saturation %), and the Ca:Mg ratio.

Use a California lab to get accurate information. If you tell the lab before they do the testing what crops you intend to grow, they can provide recommendations on the nutrients or amendments needed. Most labs will give

guidance on organic amendments, if you specify that it is an organic farm.

SOME NEARBY LABS INCLUDE:

A & L Western Ag Labs, Inc.
1311 Woodland Ave., Suite 1
Modesto, CA 95351
Phone: (209) 529-4080
209.529.4736 fax
<http://www.al-labs-west.com/>

Fruit Growers' Lab
(formerly Monarch Labs)
563 E. Lindo
Chico CA 95926
Phone: (530) 343-5818
530.343.3807 fax
<http://www.fglinc.com/>

Sunland Lab
11353 Pyrites Way. #4
Rancho Cordova, CA 95760
Phone: (916) 852-8557
<http://sunland-analytical.com/>



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