

# Preparing A Sample for VT Labs

## I. Diseased Plants and Plant Identification (\$35 Fee)

### What to Submit

- a. Submit **whole plants when possible, especially if a root problem is suspected**, e.g. when all or large parts of the plant are wilting or dying back.
- b. If sending a whole plant is not possible, you will need the following:
  - i. **a large handful of fibrous roots (skinny roots) in at least 1 pint of soil.** This will give the lab enough roots for isolations, as well as enough soil for the nematode assay if one is warranted. Submitting the roots in soil will also keep them from drying out.
  - ii. **several 1-foot sections of plant material that include *living and dead material* on each piece.** If individual branches or stems are dying, cut the stem to include the junction of healthy and affected tissue. This is the site where the pathogen is most active – and easiest for the lab to culture and diagnose. A completely dead sample is not sufficient for accurate diagnosis. If the problem appears to be a leaf disease, submit stems with affected leaves still attached. They will remain fresher that way.
  - iii. **note: Do NOT add water** to soil or other samples, **Do NOT wrap plant** material in a wet paper towel.
- c. Receipt of Payment
- d. Photos – a helpful diagnostic tool
  - e. It is helpful to submit photos of the problem to us (if possible), in conjunction with bringing in a physical sample. Take a landscape shot – showing the problem in the context of the landscape – and then a close up of the problem.

### Payment:

As of 10/1/2021 there is a \$35 fee for samples being submitted to the Plant Disease Clinic. Please provide a **check or cash payment** to your local VCE office and VCE staff will handle the Plant Disease Clinic payment. Please note, if paying by cash it must be exact as change cannot be given.

You can also make a credit/online payment by following the instructions on this website:

<https://tinyurl.com/VCE-PDC-Albemarle>. **A PAYMENT RECEIPT MUST BE INCLUDED WITH A PHYSICAL OR DIGITAL SUBMISSION.**

### Timing of submission

Please bring plant material to the Albemarle VCE Extension office on **Mondays and Tuesdays** to avoid letting it desiccate in the lab over the weekend, resulting in no diagnosis.

## **II. Turf Problems**

A turf sample should consist of a **plug of turf at least 4 inches in diameter and include half affected and half unaffected** tuft. Dig turf samples **to include soil and roots**. Place the whole plug of turf in a plastic bag.

## **III. Insect Identification**

- With the exception of butterflies and moths, insects should be **placed in alcohol** when fresh before transport to Extension office. Desiccated insects are hard to identify, and break in transport to the lab. We will place them in a vile with alcohol filled to the top.
- Insects that are difficult to see with the naked eye should be submitted on a small affected plant material in a plastic bag.

## **IV. Soil Testing**

Soil test kits and forms are available at the Albemarle VCE office.

### **Collecting a good sample**

Instructions: [http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/452/452-129/452-129\\_pdf.pdf](http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/452/452-129/452-129_pdf.pdf) One sample should be taken for each area that is managed differently or that is experiencing a problem.

### **Ideal time to sample**

You can take a soil sample any time of the year, although it's best not to do so when the soil is extremely wet. The fall months are ideal – simply because if there are lime recommendations, this is a good time of year to apply the lime.

### **Mailing**

- Place representative soil sample in baggie inside box obtained from VCE.
- Fill out form
- Place soil box, completed form and \$10 check/sample in a small mailer.
- Mail at your local post office to:

Virginia Tech Soil Testing Lab 145  
Smyth Hall (0465)  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

### **Getting your results**

- **It usually takes 1-2 weeks to receive the results** – depending on the time of year. Fall and spring are the busiest times of the year.
- The results **will be sent directly to the client via email** (if the client provided an email address) **or snail mail**.
- Please check your email junk mail if you do not receive your report
- Please contact the Extension office for access to old or misplaced soil test reports.