

# **General Q&As For Candlewood's 2019 Soil Testing Program Extending from April 12 to 26**

## **What is Candlewood's Soil Testing Program?**

- It is an environmental program designed to help residents understand the composition and fertility of their soils and suggest ways to enhance soil and plant health while protecting our surroundings, most notably Candlewood Lake and Ball & Squantz Ponds
- The program is offered annually, typically in the Spring, as a community service for all residents of the Candlewood Lake Watershed (and beyond), and is free of charge
- It involves drawing soil samples from one's lawn/garden and having them delivered/mailed to the Soil Test Lab of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven
- The program is one among several efforts being mounted to engage residents with our environment and build a positive ethic to benefit the quality of the Watershed and water bodies within

## **What's the Program's purpose?**

- To raise awareness of the value of testing one's soil before planting or fertilizing
- To explain and facilitate soil testing procedures and make the sampling process less cumbersome for residents
- To demonstrate the merits of testing and answer basic questions on lawn/garden fertilization
- To help prevent unnecessary fertilizing, over-fertilizing, or inappropriate fertilizing
- To generate interest in 'everyday-type' voluntary actions to help protect our environment

## **How does it differ from those events of prior years?**

- Last year's program format was termed 'Soil Testing Day,' allowed for the collection and local return of soil samples on a single designated day for common transport to the Test Lab, and was only held and actively promoted in New Fairfield and Sherman
- This year's expanded format, 'Soil Testing by Mail,' provides increased convenience and flexibility, extends over a two-week period, involves residents mailing samples to the Lab, and expands the program throughout the Candlewood Watershed, a key objective

## **Why should property owners test their soil?**

- To determine if their lawn or garden requires fertilization
- To determine their soil's current fertility and composition
- To receive expert advice on appropriate fertilization measures (whether to, what type, what combination of nutrients, how much to apply, and when)
- To help ensure appropriate fertilization and avoid damaging environmental outcomes
- To ultimately have a healthier environment while maintaining attractive landscapes

## **What are the benefits of participating?**

- It's easy – all of the sampling and mailing instructions are provided for you
- It's informative – learn about your soil's composition and fertility needs

- It's valuable – helps guide original planting and ongoing maintenance actions
- It's free, and only requires use of several plastic baggies and a postal envelope
- It could save time & money - by avoiding unnecessary/inappropriate expense
- Importantly, it helps protect our Watershed and our water bodies by promoting informed and customized applications, if and as warranted

**What's involved, and why has a two-week period been set aside?**

- There are six simple steps to draw & mail samples, and act on Lab recommendations
  1. Print out and follow the Sampling Instructions (also posted on the CLA web site)
  2. Scoop, mix & insert soil samples into standard zip-lock plastic baggies
  3. Complete the Transmittal Form (pg. 2 of Instructions) and insert into a padded mail envelope, together with the baggies containing the soil samples
  4. Mail envelope to the Test Lab in New Haven per the Instructions
  5. Await results and suggestions by mail directly from the Lab within ~2 weeks
  6. Visit one of our garden center sponsors or other vendors to fulfill fertilizer needs
- The period from April 12 to 26 has been earmarked by the Test Lab for expedited processing of Candlewood's soil samples so plan to mail your packaged samples by the 26<sup>th</sup> to speed report receipt (although there is no preset deadline for submission)

**What if I have questions on unique circumstances or the fertilizer recommendations?**

- Check out the CAES web site in the Instructions; for further answers, contact Greg Bugbee at CAES in New Haven @ 203/974-8521 (best time to call in spring/fall is on weekdays between 8:30 and 9 AM) or by email @ [gregory.bugbee@ct.gov](mailto:gregory.bugbee@ct.gov)

**Who is sponsoring Candlewood's Soil Testing Program?**

- The Candlewood Watershed Initiative (CWI) has taken the lead in launching and managing the Soil Testing Program series since 2008; CWI is a grassroots, volunteer team focused on protecting the quality of Candlewood Lake and its Watershed
- CWI is again partnering with the Candlewood Lake Authority (CLA), Friends of Ball Pond, and the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, which provides soil testing and fertilizing guidance
- Three Lake-area garden centers – Dom's Garden Center of Danbury, Meadowbrook Gardens of New Milford, and Scott's Landscaping and Nursery, also of New Milford – are sponsoring this year's event and providing special discounts on fertilizers for those participating; if convenient, please make a point to visit and patronize them and extend your thanks for their essential support on behalf of our Lake and Watershed