



Healing City Soils Sampling Protocol 2025

Site Selection:

Urban soils can sometimes contain heavy metal contamination from a variety of possible sources. Contaminated soils can be a concern for urban food growers and gardeners, as heavy metals may be taken up into or onto our veggies and fruits. We would like to gather data to both support your growing and gathering needs, as well as to gain a better understanding of the geographic extent of soil contamination across the CRD.

To accomplish this, we are asking you to take 2 soil samples:

1. Collect the first soil sample from the area where you are growing or gathering food.
2. Collect the second soil sample **from a nearby area that has “native soil,” or soil that has been undisturbed and/or not mixed with fill or store-bought soil**. This helps us to better understand the distribution and potential sources of heavy metals in soil, as native soil may have different contamination sources than non-native or store-bought soil.

Follow the sampling instructions below (steps 1-9) to collect your soil samples and use the sampling sheets at the end of this document to describe the areas from which you are collecting the samples. **Fill out one sampling sheet for each soil sample**. If you have any questions, please contact healingcitysoils@compost.bc.ca or call the hotline at 250-386-9676.

Sample Collection:



1. IMPORTANT: Clean your trowel or digging implement with soap and water before you begin. You want to avoid contaminating your sample with soil from another location.
2. Clear away any surface debris (grass, leaves, twigs, etc.) from a location **where you are planning to grow or gather food.**
3. Using your clean trowel, dig 15 cm deep (approximately the length of a standard pen), which is about the depth where plant roots would grow.
4. Fill half of a small, clean, and sealable plastic bag (e.g. a Ziploc sandwich-sized bag) with your soil sample.
5. With clear handwriting, label the bag with:
 - Your Name (First and Last)
 - Address
 - Date of Sampling
 - Sample #1. *Please ensure this label matches your sampling observation sheets.*
6. To avoid cross-contamination, clean your trowel or digging implement with soap and water before digging into the next sample area. You want to avoid contaminating your second sample with soil from your first sample.
7. Clear away any surface debris (grass, leaves, twigs, etc.) from a second nearby location **where you know there is “native soil.” Native soil is soil that has been undisturbed and/or not mixed with fill or store-bought soil.**
8. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for this second sampling location.

9. With clear handwriting, label the bag with:
 - Your Name (First and Last)
 - Address
 - Date of Sampling
 - Sample #2. *Please ensure this label matches your sampling observation sheets.*

Sample Submission:

After following these steps, you should have:

- Two small, sealable plastic bags that are labeled and contain soil samples from two different locations on your property.
- Two sampling observation sheets that correspond to the different soil samples.

Mail or drop off your soil samples and observation sheets at the Compost Education Centre (1216 North Park Street) during open office hours (Wednesday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm).

If you have any questions about the sampling protocol, require more guidance on how or where to collect your soil samples, or any other questions, please email healingcitysoils@compost.bc.ca. We are more than happy to help!

Soil Sampling Observation Sheet – **Sample 1**

Name of main contact:		Email address:	
Sample location address:		Sample collection date:	
Site Conditions			
Describe sample area (e.g., garden bed beside front door, backyard lawn 5 m from shed – please specify):		Proximity to house/building (in metres):	Year of house construction (if applicable):
Previous land use, or any potential sources of heavy metals or other contaminants, if known (e.g., agriculture, industrial (laundromat, petrochemical, train tracks, etc.), storage of automotive equipment, storage of chemicals, military use, quarry use, landfill, garbage burnt in backyard, nearby mechanic shop or gas station, other – please specify):			
Other observations – note anything that you think may influence soil (e.g., nearby industries, proximity to highway, slope, use of compost, treated lumber nearby, septic field, source of fill soil, use of fertilizer, etc.):			
Soil Conditions			
Soil cover (e.g., grass, leaves, pine needles, mulch, other):		Other (e.g., presence of worms/bugs, gravel/cobbles/boulders, garbage):	

Soil Sampling Observation Sheet – **Sample 2**

Name of main contact:

Email address:

Sample location address:

Sample collection date:

Site Conditions

Describe sample area (e.g., garden bed beside front door, backyard lawn 5 m from shed – please specify):

Proximity to house/building (in metres):

Year of house construction (if applicable):

Previous land use, or any potential sources of heavy metals or other contaminants, if known (e.g., agriculture, industrial (laundromat, petrochemical, train tracks, etc.), storage of automotive equipment, storage of chemicals, military use, quarry use, landfill, garbage burnt in backyard, nearby mechanic shop or gas station, other – please specify):

Other observations – note anything that you think may influence soil (e.g., nearby industries, proximity to highway, slope, use of compost, treated lumber nearby, septic field, source of fill soil, use of fertilizer, etc.):

Soil Conditions

Soil cover (e.g., grass, leaves, pine needles, mulch, other):

Other (e.g., presence of worms/bugs, gravel/cobbles/boulders, garbage):