

pH

When buying new plants for an established or a new garden, it is important to test the pH of your soil to ensure the acidity levels are correct. Your soil's pH may be quite different in various parts of your garden and therefore each area that you intend to plant should be tested.

pH AND YOUR SOIL

pH describes how acid or alkaline a soil is. A reading of pH7 is neutral, above means a chalky, alkaline soil. Whilst readings below pH7 down to pH4 indicate an acidic soil.

Plants vary in their preferences towards a high, neutral or low pH and you can see at a glance what your plants prefer in our Plant pH Preference List. By using our soil pH tester you can now decide either to alter your soil or whether to buy plants which are suitable for the type of soil you already have.

TAKING THE TEST

Remove the top 5cm (2") of soil and place to one side. Now break up the soil underneath to depth of approximately 12cm (5"). Place some of the lower level soil into a container and remove all stones and debris such as leaves and twigs. Break the soil up and leave to dry naturally. Put some of the dry soil into the test tube up to the 1ml mark. Add one scoop of barium sulphate and add the pH test solution to the 2.5ml mark. Put the cap on the test tube and shake - leave to settle for 10 minutes. If the solution is taking too long to settle add another scoop of barium sulphate. Compare the colour against the chart to determine your soil's pH level.

ALTERING THE pH

Compare your test results for each area of soil in relation to the pH of the plants that you are going to plant (see Plant pH Preference list). Most plants have a reasonably wide tolerance, of at least 1 pH point, and will be comfortable with a pH of around 6.5 but certain plants require an alkaline soil or a particularly acid soil. The type of soil in your garden will influence the amount of admixture needed to make a change to your soil's pH level.

SOIL TYPES

- Sandy Soils** - A light, coarse soil comprised of sand and silt.
- Loam Soils** - A medium 'crumbly' soil which consists of a blend of sand and fine clay mixed with a little lime and humus.
- Clay Soils** - A heavy 'lumpy' soil comprised with small amounts of lime and humus which tends to be waterlogged in the winter months and very dry in the summer months.

To increase soil alkalinity - Ground Limestone (g/m²)

Soil Type	pH Change 6.0 - 6.5	pH Change 5.5 - 6.5	pH Change 5.0 - 6.5	pH Change 4.5 - 6.5
Sandy Soil	146	238	434	621
Loam Soil	187	383	621	961
Clay Soil	238	476	816	1200