



Preparing Soil for Planting

Learn how farmers prepare soil for spring planting and try a method for testing the quality of your soil at home.



Many farm crops are planted during the spring months. Farmers spend time in early spring planning and preparing for spring planting. There are many different pieces of farm equipment that are used to prepare the soil for planting a new crop. Farmers must clean, inspect, and repair their equipment to make sure it is ready for the job ahead.

Farm Equipment Used to Prepare Soil and Plant Crops



Tractors come in different sizes. They are mainly used to pull other farm equipment such as plows, harrows, spreaders, and planters.



A **plow** has long blades that loosen and turn over the soil and kill weeds.



A **harrow** has discs that help to smooth the soil by breaking up large clumps, making it easier for new plants to grow.



A **manure spreader** adds manure to the soil to improve soil quality and help crops to grow.



A **liquid fertilizer spreader** adds fertilizer to the soil to increase the nutrients needed for crops to grow.



A **seed planter** is used to plant seeds quickly over large areas. The seed planter sows and buries seeds in equally spaced rows.

To grow a healthy crop, farmers must start with healthy soil. Farmers test their soil during spring preparation to find out what nutrients are needed. After reviewing the test results, they can make a fertilizing plan to be sure they are adding the right amount of the needed nutrients to the soil.

To watch a video about collecting soil samples from a farm in Wisconsin click [here](https://tinyurl.com/99cz9z6d).

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To watch a video about analyzing soil samples in a New York lab click [here](https://tinyurl.com/39b2jt3r).

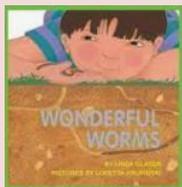
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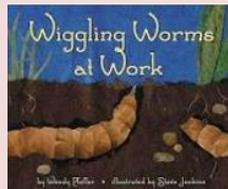
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Did you know that earthworms are a sign of healthy soil? As earthworms tunnel through the soil, they loosen the soil allowing air and water in. This makes it easier for healthy plants to grow. Worm castings (waste) add natural fertilizer to the soil, which also helps with plant growth.



Recommended
Ag Literature
Wonderful Worms
by Linda Glaser



Recommended
Ag Literature
*Wiggling Worms
at Work*
by Wendy Pfeffer



The Earthworm Soil Test

You will need: a ruler or tape measure, 4 stakes (pencils will work), a trowel, a box or tarp, gloves

- Using a ruler or tape measure and four stakes, mark a square that is 12 inches long on each side.



- Use a hand trowel to remove the soil from the square area. Dig a hole that is 12 inches deep.



- Place the soil you remove in a box or on a tarp.



- Carefully look through the soil you removed.



- How many earthworms can you find? **10 or more worms is a sign that your soil is healthy!**



- If you find fewer than 10 worms, you may want to add some compost or organic material to the soil.

