

Spring Hill Soil Laboratory
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COMPOST SAMPLE COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Collect your sample the same day you intend to mail it in or have arranged to drop it off. For the results to represent your whole pile, take a minimum of 1 teaspoon of compost from 5 different parts of the pile. If you are sampling from a windrow, collect a teaspoon from at least 20 different parts of the windrow.

Be sure to dig down to access parts of the pile at various depths, not just around the top or outside. Do not touch the sample with your hands.

Place the material in a new ziplock bag. The bag itself should not be more than half full, and sealed with as much air as possible inside (do not expel the existing air, and don't blow in the bag to add air – you could change the biology!). If the organisms run out of oxygen on their way to the lab, their community dynamics (and the representativeness of your results) will change.

Always label the outside of the bag with permanent marker. Microbes have been known to eat paper labels placed inside bags, which skews their numbers and makes identifying samples quite difficult. Clearly write the following information on the outside of the bag:

- Date of collection
- Your name/your location name
- The type of sample (eg "compost")
- Any other important identification information to go on the report

It is important to **phone ahead to confirm that your sample can be received and analysed during an appropriate time period BEFORE mailing or dropping it off.** Please choose expedited shipping and only mail on a Monday or Tuesday, so the sample doesn't sit in a post office over the weekend.

Please note: If your compost contains humanure, pig or pet poop or potentially contaminated starting materials, please phone the lab to discuss.