

## Obtaining a Sample for Soilless Media Testing

The soilless media test is intended for use with growth media appropriate for greenhouse or nursery crop production in containers or raised benches with limited volume. This test is not appropriate for field soil. Field soil is typically not included in growth media for these systems, nor is it recommended. If you wish to test field soil, with or without organic amendments, request a routine soil test at your County Extension Office.

### Obtain a Representative Sample

Growth media samples should be representative of the bed or bench of a given crop. A sampling strategy should consider crop species, planting time, container size and environmental parameters such as shading, location in a greenhouse or nursery bed, etc.

Ideally, a sample should be taken from plants representing each of the possible variations in these factors. However, circumstances may not allow crop management to differ with each of these variations. Therefore, it is best to select several subsamples from plants that will be managed as a block and submit a composite sample.

### Sampling Time

Samples may be taken from bulk media before the crop is planted to determine beginning status.

Sampling time should also be considered relative to recent management activities or environmental events such as rainfall. If a crop is receiving routine liquid fertilization, it is generally accepted to wait four to six hours after the application before sampling.

### Step-by-Step

Use the sample bags provided by your extension office to collect the sample.

- 1) Collect 6 to 8 subsamples from several locations in beds, or from 6 to 8 representative containers in a block. Each of these subsamples should include the growth medium from the whole root zone from the surface to the bottom of the raised bed or container. This is necessary because the soluble salts and other parameters can differ with depth in a container or bed.
- 2) Thoroughly mix the subsamples together to create a pooled sample.
- 3) Take two pints of the mixture as your sample. Two pints will fill two sample bags.
- 4) Mark the sample with an owner ID.
- 5) Samples and the completed submission forms should be delivered to your County Extension Office.