SOIL TRANSFORMATIONS

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Compost or Soil Collection Instructions for Microbe Assessments

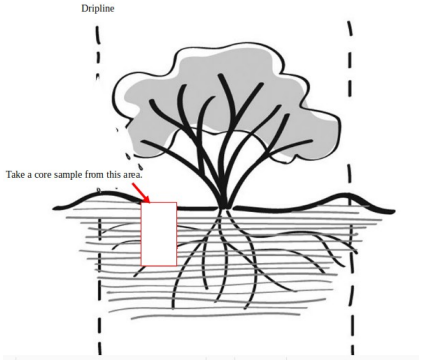
Supplies Needed

- An apple corer, soil core sampler, or trowel
- Resealable plastic sandwich bag (i.e. sample bag)
- Permanent marker

1. Contact me to schedule your assessment(s) so we can look at your sample(s) in a timely manner since it (hopefully) contains live organisms.

2. Collect material- Ideally, minimum soil/ compost temperature should be 50° and material freshly collected (same day is best) to ensure the biology is active. Remove any mulch or other surface cover. Using an apple corer, soil core sampler, or trowel, take approximately 1 teaspoon about 3-5" down from the surface. This is a core sample. Collect core samples from different areas based on your scenario below:

- **For a bare field** (no plants growing)- Collect 3-5 core samples from random areas and place them in one plastic bag. Avoid areas that are not representative of the field (e.g. boundary edge or a depression).



- **For a field with plants growing**- Collect 3-5 core samples from random areas around several plants and place the core samples in one plastic bag. Take each core sample halfway between a plant stem and the edge of the plant's dripline. (You want to minimize damage to roots but get close enough where all the microbial action is happening.)

- **For compost or worm castings**- Collect 1 teaspoon from each of 4-5 different areas from your compost pile or worm bin and mix in one plastic bag. Take the teaspoons from various locations and depths within the pile or bin to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire area.

3. Do not fill a plastic sample bag more than half-way with material. (Note: to reduce the amount of sample material, you may combine and thoroughly mix the sample material separately, in a clean container, and then place a smaller amount of the mixture in the sample bag).

4. Seal the bag with the air left inside it – Do not expel the air from the bag, as this will limit the oxygen available to the biology in the sample which may result in anaerobic conditions being formed.

5. Label the **outside** of the sample bag. Using a permanent marker, write the following information: your name, the date, and the sample name (e.g. field 1 "before," squash patch w/ weeds, or

something else to identify it.) Do **not** put any paper inside the sample bag, as this will become food for microbes and distort the results.

6. Deliver sample(s) to the above address unless other arrangements have been made. While transporting, keep the sample at ambient temperature away from sunlight (e.g. in a box). For sample drop-off, there is a blue insulated box on the porch where you can put your sample(s).

Liquid Sample Collection Protocol (e.g. Compost Extract or Tea)

1. Pour liquid into a clean, not-breakable 4 to 8 oz container with a sealable opening (e.g. plastic water bottle with screw cap).

2. Fill the container ⅓ full with the liquid you want to have assessed. Leave the remainder of the container empty to maximize head space for air exchange.

3. Once the screw cap is tightly sealed, cover it with duct tape and place it in a sealed plastic bag.

4. Using a permanent marker or affixed label, label the outside of the container with your name, the date, and the the sample name.

5. Deliver the sample to the lab at the above address unless other arrangements have been made.

These are general guidelines, but if you have different circumstances or questions about collecting samples, please contact me. I am here to help you cultivate a healthier soil community so you can grow healthier plants!