





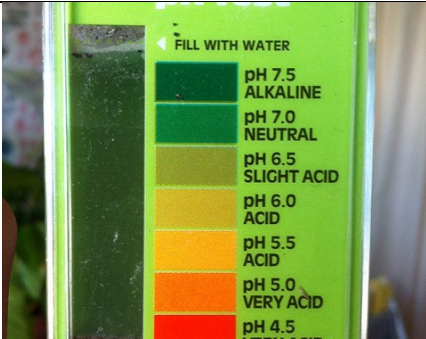
5 Steps for Great Garden Soil

(Raised beds or pots for vegetables *, annuals, etc.)

The ideal garden soil is, friable, well-drained, and has a high organic matter content.

Handout = Master Gardener Marketing brochure (contains Extension Office soil test info)

1.		Start with local mineral soil (i.e. native soil) – may not have much if any organic material
2.		Add bagged soil of your choice. This will add texture and moisture-holding organic matter to your local soil to help make the local soil more friable (crumbly). This is optional, depending on the amount of compost you add (Step 3)
3.		Add compost and/or leaf mulch. This needs to be added each year as the native soil in Yavapai County has very little, if any organic matter.

<p>4.</p>		<p>Add fertilizer and mineral supplements (such as Azomite) based on mfg recommendations. The soil needs nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium which are the primary nutrients. Labels on fertilizer will include: N= Nitrogen P= Phosphate K= Potash</p>
<p>5.</p>		<p>Have the soil tested for pH.</p> <p>Soil pH can influence availability of essential plant nutrients. A soil pH greater than 7 is considered alkaline and a soil pH of 6.5 is optimal for nutrient availability. Most Arizona soils are between pH 7 and pH 8 and pH readings of 8.5 are common on soils that have significant amounts of limestone in their parent material. Elemental sulfur can be incorporated (to a depth of 8 inches or more) as a soil amendment to decrease the pH or acidify such soils. While it is extremely rare, soils with large quantities of organic matter can be acidic. In these rare cases, lime can be applied to increase the soil pH.</p> <p>The Extension office offers free pH soil testing. For more in depth testing see AZ1111 (Texas A&M).</p>

*Footnote: it is normal to have to add soil in raised beds and pots every one to two years.