

What's Up With Your Soil?

Interested in getting free refreshments and free expert information on having a healthy lawn, pasture, garden, shrubs or flowers? If so, join us tomorrow, Thursday, March 6 at the Rock Building in Centreville from 1-5pm for our program **“What's Up With Your Soil?”** Plenty of audience space is available, and registration is not necessary. The program will take place on the main floor of the Rock Building. Call us at 205-926-3117 for more information.

Sponsors for the program are Bibb Supply, G & H Building Supply, and Shrub & Tree Landscaping/Nursery. We are grateful to each of these businesses for their support of this program.

The program will focus on the different properties of soil and the importance of healthy soil to the success of our gardens and lawns. Soil structure, soil pH, plant nutrients, and composting will be discussed. Information will also be provided on collecting and submitting soil samples to Auburn University.

While the primary focus of the program will be the importance of testing your soil and giving it the proper nutrients, several Extension professionals with expertise in horticulture will be on hand to answer general questions about grounds, gardens, pests and other aspects of horticulture.

Among these professionals will be Taylor Hatchett, Bibb County's new Regional Extension Agent in Home Grounds, Gardens and Pests. Taylor is young, energetic and eager to increase the number of horticulture programs in Bibb County. Furthermore, horticulture is very much in her blood. Taylor's father, Bobby Boozer, is well-known known for his work with fruit trees at the Chilton County Experiment Station.

Here's a “sneak peek” at some of the material to be covered in the program, courtesy of Regional Extension Agent David Hubbard... You have definitely chosen the right time to be thinking about whether you need to improve lawn and landscape soils. Most people wait until everything is planted and find they have all sorts of soil or drainage problems.

Poor soil is a common cause for failure to grow vigorous, attractive lawns, trees and shrubs. Natural topsoils vary greatly from one location to another. Their ability to grow plants can differ from block to block, side to side or from the bottom of a slope to the top.

Dark color and crumbly texture may indicate good soil but are not a guarantee that the soil contains all the necessary nutrients. Have a soil test run before the soil is prepared so that fertilizer deficiencies may be corrected as well as pH. After the soil test results have been returned, work any recommended materials into the upper 6 inches of soil.

Organic matter is very important to successful plant growth. At least 2 percent organic matter should be present for growing lawn grasses. Other garden plants will thrive in a soil with about 5 percent organic matter. To add this organic matter spread 1 to 3 inches of peat, compost or well-rotted manure over the soil when other nutrients are added, sand may also be used if needed. All these should then be worked to a depth of about 6 inches into the existing soil.

Matthew Hartzell, County Extension Coordinator
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Bibb County Extension Office
Phone: 205-926-3117 Fax: 205-926-5114