

Water Resources Research Institute Offers Free Soil Testing for DC Residents

The Environmental Quality Testing Laboratory of the University of the District of Columbia is providing one-time free soil quality testing for D.C. residents or gardeners. The service will be offered on a first come, first served basis for a limited time throughout July and August as part of a USDA-grant, funded to analyze soil samples in home and community gardens around D.C.

Urban agriculture is increasingly becoming a way of life for city residents; therefore, it is important to test the soil quality your garden for three main reasons. First, soil can contain contaminants that pose risk to human health. Second, we may not have enough information about the level of contamination in our soil. Finally, testing our soil give us valuable information to improve your garden and promote healthy soil.

The analysis offered by the Environmental Quality Testing Laboratory will measure macro nutrients and environmental trace metals such as lead and arsenic. Most soil testing is limited in scope due to cost, so this offer is especially beneficial to D.C.'s gardeners as it saves money and provides complete information about the level of trace metals in their garden. Once the Environmental Quality Lab has received [NELAC](#) certification, it will be prepared to offer a similar fee-based service in the future. At that time, D.C. residents will no longer have to send their soil out of state.

“We receive several inquiries a week as to whether we offer this service, and we’ve always had to recommend out of state laboratories,” explained Dr. Tolessa Deksissa, Director of UDC’s Water Resources Research Institute, Professional Science Master’s (PSM) Program and Environmental Quality Testing Laboratory. “In time, when we offer this soil testing at cost, being located in the District will help to make services more cost effective, along with our use of innovative techniques to measure specific environmental contaminants.”

Interested D.C. residents are encouraged to [apply](#). Graduate and undergraduate research students have already begun collecting samples. Once your application is reviewed, you will be contacted by WRRRI to schedule a sampling collection time.

“It is very exciting to offer this opportunity to the residents of D.C.,” said Dr. Sabine O’Hara, College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES). “As an urban landgrant institution, we are thrilled to be able to offer soil testing service to our community.”

Located at UDC’s Van Ness Campus, the Environmental Quality Testing Lab was constructed to help District residents have a convenient and affordable way of testing water and soil for environmental contaminants and other impurities and to serve as an unbiased monitor of surface, ground and municipal water quality in D.C., helping to protect water resources and human health. The lab has state-of-the-art equipment that can be applied to the analysis of chemical and biological water

quality parameters in soil, water and wastewater, and also the research capacity to measure the existing environmental conditions and identify alternative solutions to address environmental problems.

The Water Resources Research Institute is part of the CAUSES Center for Sustainable Development. Funded by USGS, the Institute provides seed grants to innovative water-related projects that identify problems of and contribute solutions to DC water issues. For more information on CAUSES, visit www.udc.edu/causes. For questions, please contact tdeksissa@udc.edu or at (202) 274-5273. We look forward to receiving your application.

###

About WRRRI

Established in 1973, the mission of Water Resources Research Institute (WRRRI) is to provide the District of Columbia with interdisciplinary research support to identify DC water resources problems and contribute to their solution. Areas of focus include drinking water source protection, stormwater management and planning, water safety, and watershed stewardship. The Institute coordinates, facilitates, and disseminates water resources-related research projects through seed grants to faculty members from the consortium of universities in the greater Metropolitan Washington area. The Institute supports collaborative training and research that engages not only faculty members and students, but also a broad array of stakeholders to address regional water issues in a holistic way.

About the University of the District of Columbia

An HBCU, urban land-grant, and the only public university in the nation's capital, The University of the District of Columbia is committed to a broad mission of education, research and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtilla Miner in 1851, the University of DC offers Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's Degrees and a host of workplace development services designed to create opportunities for student success. The University is comprised of the [College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences](#), [College of Arts and Sciences](#), [School of Business and Public Administration](#), [School of Engineering and Applied Sciences](#), a [Community College](#) and the [David A. Clarke School of Law](#). To learn more, visit www.udc.edu. The University of the District of Columbia is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action institution. Minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply. For a full version of the University's EO Policy Statement, please visit: http://www.udc.edu/equal_opportunity. The University of the District of Columbia is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education - 3624 Market Street - Philadelphia, PA 19104 - 267.284.5000.