DR. DIRT'S SOIL TESTS ANYONE CAN DO AT HOME · TEST 5 OF 11

The Wire Flag Test

Where does your soil get hard?



Time: 10 minutes | Kids and grown-ups together

You will need

- ☐ A wire survey flag (from a hardware store) or a straight piece of stiff wire with tape on the end
- ☐ A ruler

Try it

1. Test a day after rain or watering. Dry soil always feels hard.
2. Hold the wire straight up near the top.
3. Push it straight down, slow and steady. Don't force it.
4. Stop when it bends or won't go any further. Pinch it at the soil line and pull it out.
5. Measure how deep it went. Try 5 spots: a garden bed, the lawn, a path, under a tree.

What it means

Slides past 12 inches (30 cm)
Loose and open. Roots and worms move easily.

Stops in the top few inches
A hard, packed layer. Roots and worms struggle to get through.

A sudden stop and a clink
Probably a rock. Try a spot nearby.

> **Helping hard soil:** Stay off wet soil, keep paths in one place, mulch, and grow deep-rooted plants like daikon radish. Roots and worms open it up.

Wonder: *Where in your yard is the soil hardest? Who walks there?*

My result