



Lawn care guide - Soils



Good soils are the key to a healthy lawn

1

Check your soil's pH. It will help you work out if your soil is healthy or if it needs some work. Most warm season grasses need a pH range of 5.5 to 7.5 to grow strong.

To test your soil, use a simple pH testing kit from your gardening supplier.

Remember:

Acidic soils have a low pH and can be fixed using lime-based products.

Alkaline soils have a high pH and need ammonium sulphate fertilisers.

2

You can do a simple 'screwdriver test' to check your soil's infiltration rate*. You should be able to push a household screwdriver 50mm into your soil pretty easily.

* The infiltration rate is the amount of water that soil can soak up in a given time.

3

Traffic on your lawn (from people and pets) after watering can cause soil to compact, which makes it harder to absorb water. It's always best to water at night when there's less lawn traffic.

4

Starting from scratch? New lawns need a topsoil layer of at least 70mm with the right mix of soil textures.

5

Townsville's lawns are often grown on clay soils which don't soak in water easily.

6

Clay soils can only absorb between 1mm and 5mm of water per hour. Any more than that is often lost as run off that takes valuable nutrients with it.

7

A slow soak with a water efficient sprinkler is best for Townsville soils.

8

A clay soil will become rock hard in the dry season and can be boggy in the wet. Adding 1-2kg of gypsum for every square metre can improve clay soils and lawn health.

9

Mulch mowing on heavy clay soils can improve the soil structure and help your grass absorb more water into its roots.

10

Sandy soils are common in the coastal suburbs of Townsville and they need some special care. Watering too quickly in sandy soils will flush precious nutrients from the soil.

11

If you have a sandy soil, it's important to check your irrigation for leaks regularly. Sandy soil can be good at disguising a leak.

12

Too much salt is bad for your health, and your lawn is no different. Salty soils are common in Townsville, particularly in low lying suburbs. Salinity can harm your lawn because it stops moisture from the soil getting to the grass roots.

To reduce salinity you need organic matter on your lawn. Try giving your catcher a break. Grass clippings will increase the amount of water your soil can store.

13

Carpet grass and buffalo in particular don't cope well with salinity.

What does this mean?

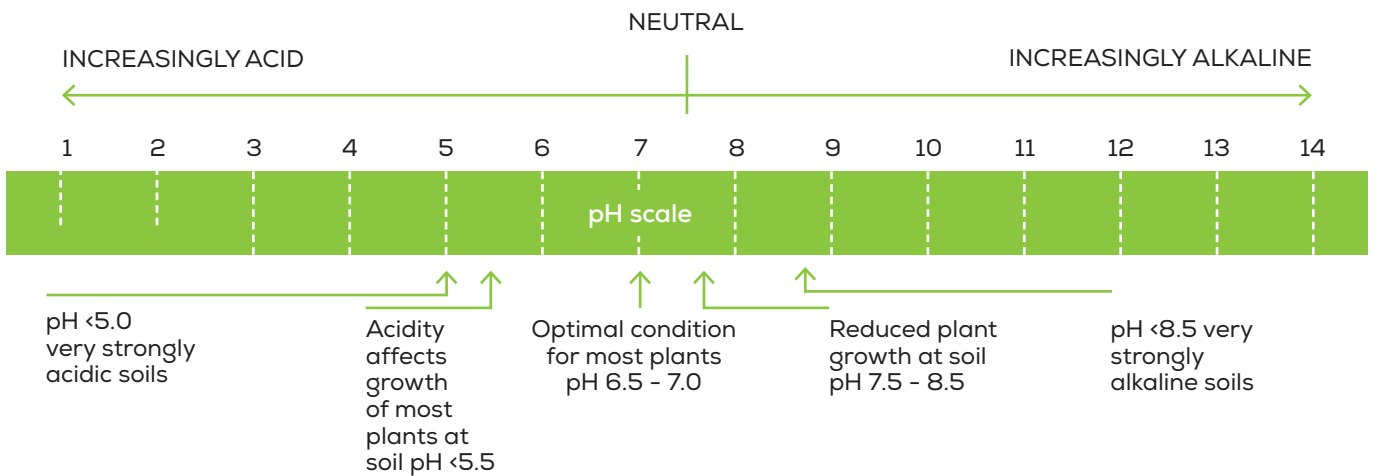
To build a solid house, you need a good foundation. It's the same with grass! Growing a strong lawn starts with knowing your soil. There are numerous different soils and topsoil mixes. Understanding which one you have could mean the difference between having a strong, healthy lawn or a sick one.

Once you know your soil type you can work out how you should water it, how often you should water, how much moisture your lawn is absorbing, and how much nutrient is available to it.

What your pH level means:

Acidic: When soil pH value is lower than 7, soil is acidic.

Alkaline: When soil pH value is higher than 7, soil is alkaline.



Relative soil particle sizes

