DR. DIRT'S SOIL TESTS ANYONE CAN DO AT HOME · TEST 10 OF 11

The Tea Bag Rot Test

How hungry is your soil life?



Time: 10 minutes, then wait 2 to 3 months

Kids and grown-ups together

You will need

- ☐ Two tea bags (green tea in a mesh bag lasts best), or a new pair of 100% cotton underwear
- ☐ A trowel and two marker sticks
- ☐ A kitchen scale, if you have one

Try it

1. Weigh each tea bag, or take a photo of the underwear.
2. Bury each about 3 inches (8 cm) deep in a different spot: a garden bed and a lawn or a bare spot. Mark each with a stick.
3. Wait 2 to 3 months.
4. Dig them up, brush off the soil, let them dry, then weigh or look.

What it means

Lots eaten (big holes, light tea bag)
Busy soil life: bacteria, fungi and worms at work.

Nearly whole
Slow soil life. It may be too dry, packed down or low in food.

Good to know: Soil life eats faster when it's warm and moist. Hawai'i's warm soil can work fast!

Safety: Wash your hands after.

***Wonder**: Which spot ate more? Why do you think so?*

My result