

A Guide to Cleaning Soil Sampling Equipment



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture



What equipment do I clean?

Soil sampling equipment includes step probes, slide hammers, bulk density sampling kits, shovels, and augers. It also includes buckets, tools to remove soil from probes (e.g., screwdrivers, butter knives, ejection spoons), and anything else that touches soil while sampling. All equipment and tools should be cleaned regularly.



When, why, and how do I clean equipment?

Between sampling sites: Minimize the spread of insects, diseases, and noxious weeds by removing visible soil, vegetation, seeds, and debris from equipment and boots. Prevent biological or chemical contamination of each sample by wiping all equipment with a disinfectant in between sampling sites. Spray a solution containing 70% ethanol (or equivalent) onto the equipment and use a rag to wipe all surfaces clean.

After the field season is complete: Prevent moisture and soil from corroding equipment by cleaning all tools before they are stored for the season. If you are cleaning immediately after sampling, this should be an easy task. Use a cleaning rag and disinfectant to remove any lingering debris. If needed, use a heavy-duty scouring pad to gently scrub away persistent soil. Thoroughly dry all tools with a clean rag. Store equipment in a dry, sheltered area away from moisture sources.



Supplies:

- Cleaning rags
- Heavy-duty scouring pad
- Disinfectant solution (70% ethanol)

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Contact WSDA at (360) 902-1976 or TTY Relay (800) 833-6388.

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Oops! How do I clean rusty equipment?

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, rust can form on your stainless-steel equipment. Depending on the damage, soak the rusty equipment in white vinegar for a few minutes or up to 24 hours. After, scrub away rust with a heavy-duty scouring pad. Make sure equipment is completely dry before storing it again.

Supplies:

- White vinegar
- Heavy-duty scouring pad
- Container for soaking
- Cleaning rags



Soaking a rusted soil probe in a container with white vinegar.



Scrubbing away rust with a heavy-duty scouring pad.



Rust-free top end of the probe with uncleaned, rusty middle portion for comparison.



Visit our [WSDA Soil Health webpage](#) for more information, or email WaSHI@agr.wa.gov.

Additional information:

- [WSDA A Farmer's Guide to Collecting Soil Samples](#)
- [WSDA soil sampling standard operating procedures](#), for more extensive soil sampling
- [WSDA soil sampling instructional videos](#)
- [Washington State University soil testing resources](#)