



Standard Test Method for pH of Soils¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 4972; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the measurement of the pH of soils for uses other than for corrosion testing. Such measurements are used in the agricultural, environmental, and natural resources fields. This measurement determines the degree of acidity or alkalinity in soil materials suspended in water and a 0.01 M calcium chloride solution. Measurements in both liquids are necessary to fully define the soil's pH. This variable is useful in determining the solubility of soil minerals and the mobility of ions in the soil and assessing the viability of the soil-plant environment. A more detailed discussion of the usefulness of this parameter is not warranted here; however, it can be found in many discussions of the subject. A few such discussions are given as Refs (1-6)² at the end of the text.

1.2 The values given in SI units are to be regarded as the standard.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:³

C 670 Practice for Preparing Precision and Bias Statements for Test Methods for Construction Materials

D 653 Terminology Relating to Soil, Rock, and Contained Fluids

D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water

D 3740 Practice for Minimum Requirements for Agencies Engaged in the Testing and/or Inspection of Soil and Rock as Used in Engineering Design and Construction

G 51 Test Method for Measuring pH of Soil for Use in Corrosion Testing

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 For common definitions of terms used in this standard, refer to Terminology **D 653**.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Measurement of the pH of soils in both suspensions of water and a calcium chloride solution are made with either a potentiometer using a pH sensitive electrode system (Method A), or pH sensitive paper (Method B). The potentiometer is calibrated with buffer solutions of known pH. The pH sensitive paper is a less accurate measurement and should only be used for a rough estimate of the soil pH. The electrode must be used for this measurement unless the pH sensitive paper is specified.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The pH of the soil is a useful variable in determining the solubility of soil minerals and the mobility of ions in the soil and assessing the viability of the soil-plant environment.

5.2 pH measurements are made in both water and a calcium chloride solution because the calcium displaces some of the exchangeable aluminum. The low ionic strength counters the dilution effect on the exchange equilibrium by setting the salt concentration of the solution closer to that expected in the soil solution. The pH values obtained in the solution of calcium chloride are slightly lower than those measured in water due to the release of more aluminum ions which then hydrolyses. Therefore, both measurements are required to fully define the character of the soil's pH.

5.3 For the purpose of this test method the test soil must be sieved through a No. 10 sieve (2 mm sieve mesh openings). Measurements on soils or soil fractions having particle sizes larger than 2 mm by this test method may be invalid. If soil or

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D18 on Soil and Rock and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D18.22 on Soil as a Medium for Plant Growth.

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² The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of the test method.

³ For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.