



Is soil an important ingredient in your every day life?

The answer is yes, and here are a few reasons why:

- Last night you slept in a building built on soil.
- You drink water that flows through soil and is cleaned by the soil.
- You breathe air that comes partly from plants growing in the soil.
- You even wear clothes made from plants that grow in the soil.

Soils make our lives possible. We build on them, play on them, drive on them, eat food grown in or raised on them, take medicines from them, wear clothes we wouldn't have without soils, drink water that wouldn't be clean without soils, breathe air we wouldn't have without the plants and trees growing in soils. The entire earth—every ecosystem, every living organism—is dependent upon soils.

A Few Facts about Soil

- Soil makes up the outermost layer of our planet.
- Topsoil is the most productive soil layer.
- Soil has varying amounts of organic matter (living and dead organisms), minerals and nutrients.
- Five tons of topsoil spread over an acre is only as thick as a dime.
- Natural processes can take more than 500 years to form one inch of topsoil.
- Soil scientists have identified over 70,000 kinds of soil in the United States.
- Soil is formed from rocks and decaying plants and animals.
- An average soil sample is 45 percent minerals, 25 percent water, 25 percent air and five percent organic matter.

- Different-sized mineral particles, such as sand, silt, and clay, give soil its texture.
- Fungi and bacteria help break down organic matter in the soil.
- Plant roots and lichens break up rocks which become part of new soil.
- Roots loosen the soil, allowing oxygen to penetrate. This benefits animals living in the soil.
- Roots hold soil together and help prevent erosion.

Information provided by U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service and listed on the Environmental Protection Agency website at <http://epa.gov/gmpo/edresources/soil.html>.

Soils Education Materials

NACD has been working with the Smithsonian and Soil Science Society of America in the development of soils materials to compliment the "Dig It! The Secrets of Soils" exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History (<http://www.forces.si.edu/soils/>). These materials can also be used in conjunction with 2009 NACD Stewardship Week, which is also themed "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil," or in addition to your conservation education outreach projects and programs. The soils education materials were designed to teach students (K-8) as well as adults about the importance of soils in their everyday lives. The exhibit will be in Washington, D.C. until January 2010 and then will travel to ten cities around the United States through 2013.

[Soil Materials Preview Flyer](#) - Download a flyer of the "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" materials.

[NACD Marketplace](#) - The "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" education materials are available for to purchase at the NACD Marketplace.

[2009 Soils Material Planning Sheet](#) - A one-page overview of all the soils education materials available for purchase. Download the planning sheet and start planning your soil education order today!

[2009 Soil Stewardship Week Page](#) - For more than 50 years, NACD has sponsored "Stewardship Week", a national program to encourage Americans to focus on stewardship. The program relies on locally-led conservation districts sharing and promoting stewardship and conservation activities. Stewardship Week is officially celebrated from the last Sunday in April to the first Sunday in May. The theme for NACD's 2009 Stewardship Program is "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil."