

# ABC's of Our Living Soil

- A**ir (like water) is about 25% of soil's composition, with mineral (45%) and organic matter (5%).
- B**acterium in soil makes you happy! *Mycobacterium vaccae* stimulates serotonin production.
- C**omposting is the natural process of recycling organic material into valuable fertilizer.
- D**irt is dead, but soil is alive, with living matter much too small to be seen with the naked eye!
- E**arth's surface is 70-80% covered by water. Soil accounts for the rest.
- F**ill dirt lacks organic material. It's a sturdy construction base, with sand, rocks, shale, stones, etc.
- G**eophagy is the intentional practice of eating earthy substances, such as clay and chalk.
- H**heavy metals contaminating soil (i.e., copper, lead & cadmium) feed roly-poly bugs.
- I**ron-rich soil helps Florida's roughly 900 blueberry farms produce 21.5 million pounds annually.
- J**unkyards, landfills and waste disposal sites pose high risk of soil and water contamination.
- K**rotovina (a Russian/Ukrainian word, for *mole tunnel*) is an animal burrow filled with soil.
- L**eave the leaves! They provide extra organic matter that improves soil structure.
- M**yakka (an Indian word, for *big waters*) is fine sand unique to Florida. It's the official state soil.
- N**eutral soil pH is best for most plants. Test soil at UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough in Seffner.
- O**ne tablespoon of soil has more organisms than there are people on earth!
- P**urple clay from Brazil helps prevent skin absorption of environmental contaminants/impurities.
- Q**uartz is sand's main mineral. The weathering of continental land masses creates quartz crystals.
- R**ill erosion causes shallow, curvy parallel channels in soil. More water creates larger/deeper rills.
- S**oil is *earth*, not *dirt*. Soil minerals/gases/liquids/organic matter support plant life/soil organisms.
- T**opsoil is magic! Use to improve drainage, enrich soil nutrients and texture, aid planting & more.
- U**tisols (commonly known as *red clay soils*) are naturally suitable for forestry.
- V**asily V. Dokuchaev (considered the founder of soil science) first conceived of soil as a living system.
- W**orm poop (also known as *worm castings* or *vermicast*) is an excellent soil-enricher.
- X**erept is a thin, rocky soil found in areas with dry summers & wet winters, like Montana & Greece!
- Y**ou can improve soil, with compost, mulch, aged animal manure and pH testing as needed.
- Z**oysia grass, like St. Augustine, is a popular option for Florida lawns. (HOA's take note!)



Hillsborough Soil & Water  
Conservation District

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