

ABC's of Our Living Soil

Air (like water) is about 25% of soil's composition, with mineral (45%) and organic matter (5%).

Bacterium in soil makes you happy! *Mycobacterium vaccae* stimulates serotonin production.

Composting is the natural process of recycling organic material into valuable fertilizer.

Dirt is dead, but soil is alive, with living matter much too small to be seen with the naked eye!

Earth's surface is 70-80% covered by water. Soil accounts for the rest.

Fill dirt lacks organic material. It's a sturdy construction base, with sand, rocks, shale, stones, etc.

Geophagy is the intentional practice of eating earthy substances, such as clay and chalk.

Hheavy metals contaminating soil (i.e., copper, lead & cadmium) feed roly-poly bugs.

Iron-rich soil helps Florida's roughly 900 blueberry farms produce 21.5 million pounds annually.

Junkyards, landfills and waste disposal sites pose high risk of soil and water contamination.

Krotovina (a Russian/Ukrainian word, for *mole tunnel*) is an animal burrow filled with soil.

Leave the leaves! They provide extra organic matter that improves soil structure.

Myakka (an Indian word, for *big waters*) is fine sand unique to Florida. It's the official state soil.

Neutral soil pH is best for most plants. Test soil at UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough in Seffner.

One tablespoon of soil has more organisms than there are people on earth!

Purple clay from Brazil helps prevent skin absorption of environmental contaminants/impurities.

Quartz is sand's main mineral. The weathering of continental land masses creates quartz crystals.

Rill erosion causes shallow, curvy parallel channels in soil. More water creates larger/deeper rills.

Soil is *earth*, not *dirt*. Soil minerals/gases/liquids/organic matter support plant life/soil organisms.

Topsoil is magic! Use to improve drainage, enrich soil nutrients and texture, aid planting & more.

Utisols (commonly known as *red clay soils*) are naturally suitable for forestry.

Vasily V. Dokuchaev (considered the founder of soil science) first conceived of soil as a living system.

Worm poop (also known as *worm castings* or *vermicast*) is an excellent soil-enricher.

Xerept is a thin, rocky soil found in areas with dry summers & wet winters, like Montana & Greece!

You can improve soil, with compost, mulch, aged animal manure and pH testing as needed.

Zoysia grass, like St. Augustine, is a popular option for Florida lawns. (HOA's take note!)



Hillsborough Soil & Water
Conservation District

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