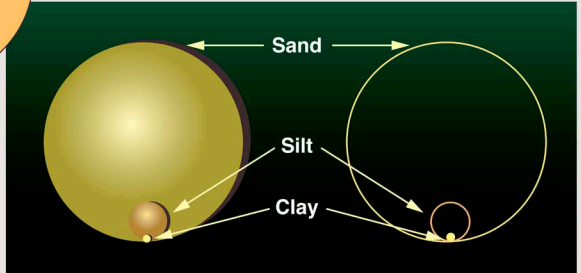
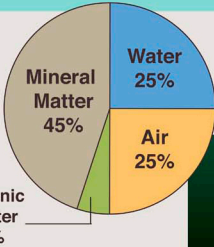


What Is Soil?

Soil is the thin layer on the surface of the earth in which our vegetables, fruits, flowers and forests grow. We live, work, play and travel on soil.

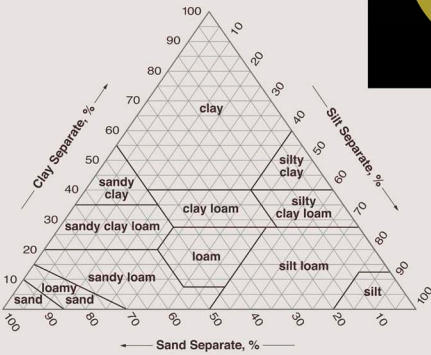
Soil may be red, brown, gray or other colors. Some soils are deep, and others are shallow. But no matter how we define soils or how soils differ, one thing is certain - there could be no life without soil.

Soil is made of:
 - mineral matter
 - organic matter
 - air
 - water



Most of what you see is the mineral part. The different size mineral particles, or grains, come from rock that has broken into tiny pieces. The pieces are called sand, silt or clay, depending on their size.

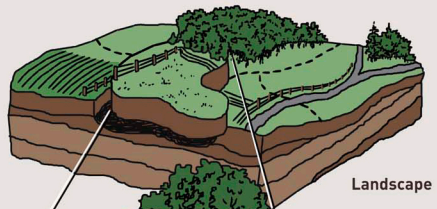
Soil Textural Triangle



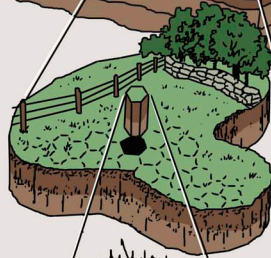
Soil texture is determined by the proportion of sand, silt and clay in the soil.

What Makes Soils Different?

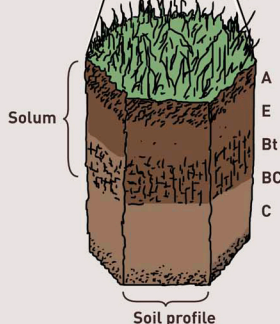
There are over 70,000 different kinds of soils in the United States with over 300 different kinds found in Louisiana. A soil is a three-dimensional natural body in the same sense that a hill, valley, or mountain has three dimensions. Soils occur on landscapes and are delineated on aerial photographs by trained soil scientists. These delineations are called polygons or polypedons, and they represent soil areas that are similar with regard to the intended uses of that soil. Polypedons have many pedons (soil profiles) included within their boundaries. The reason soils are different is due to the interaction of climate, living organisms and landscape position as they influence the decomposition and transformation of the soil over time. Soils form in weathered bedrock or in material deposited by ice, wind, water or gravity.



Landscape



A polypedon or soil individual



A "pedon"

Soil profile