



Activity

Soil - It's More Than Just Dirt

Conduct a **soil experiment**.

What You Need:

- Soil
- 3 Containers (30 x 30 x 30 cm)
- pH kits
- Water
- Compost
- Seeds

Here's how:



1. Collect enough soil to fill three 30 x 30 x 30 centimetre containers. Determine the quality of the soil by running a few simple soil tests: test the acidity and alkalinity with pH kits, check porosity by seeing how fast water runs through soil sample, determine general proportions of sand, silt, clay and organic matter through a settling test, and examine a sample under a microscope to identify and count any species found.
2. Divide and place soil in all three containers. Label containers 1, 2 and 3. In containers 2 and 3, add compost (table scraps, leaves, grass clippings, etc.), and in container 3, add earthworms as well. Once a week, water the soil lightly and add more compost to containers 2 and 3.
3. Record any visible changes.
4. After about three weeks, test a sample of soil from each of the containers. Any differences?
5. Plant the same number of fast growing seeds (e.g. radishes) in each of the containers and record date of planting, watering procedures and any changes in the containers as the plants begin to grow.
6. After three weeks, compare and discuss the results and the importance of plants and animals as contributors to healthy soil ecosystems.

Source: Canadian Wildlife Federation, Project Wild

For more information and great "AG-tivity" ideas on the importance of different types of soil and their characteristics, and the importance of soil conservation visit <http://www.florence.ars.usda.gov/kidsonly/element/dirt.htm>.