

Greenville County Soil & Water Conservation District 2017 Essay Contest



Soils are the foundation for everything that we are and do. From the clothes we wear, the food we eat, to the houses we live in, every person and thing gets its start from the soil!

Open to 5th - 8th grade students

Essay Contest Rules:

- The essay topic for this year is “**Healthy Soils Are Full of Life**”
- Contest is open to any Greenville County student in 5th – 8th grade or equivalent.
- Essay length:
 - 350-400 words for 5th & 6th graders
 - 600-750 words for 7th & 8th graders
- Essays must be typed or hand written (in ink) on one side of the paper
- **Punctuation and grammar count! Make sure your essay is double checked for errors!**

- **You MUST have a TITLE page as your first page with ALL of the following information:**
 - **student name and home mailing address**
 - **email address (winners will be contacted by email)**
 - **name of school, name of teacher, teacher email, and grade level**

- **Essay may address ANY or ALL of the following:**
 - Why is healthy soil important?
 - What types of life can be found in the soil?
 - How do you interact daily with the soil?
 - What connection does healthy soil have to people?
 - What can you do to help keep our soil healthy?

BE CREATIVE! The winners each year have shown a level of creativity and content over and above the average. Tell a personal story or anecdote to make your essay stand out in a crowd!

3 awards in each grade level- \$50 cash prize per student
Special “thank you” gifts for teachers of award winners

Deadline: 4:30 PM on Wednesday, March 24, 2017

Please mail or hand-deliver entries to:

Essay Contest
Greenville Soil & Water Conservation District
301 University Ridge, Ste. 4800
Greenville, SC 29601



Questions about the essay or contest?

Contact Lynn Pilewski at
864-920-6397 or
lpilewski@greenvillecounty.org

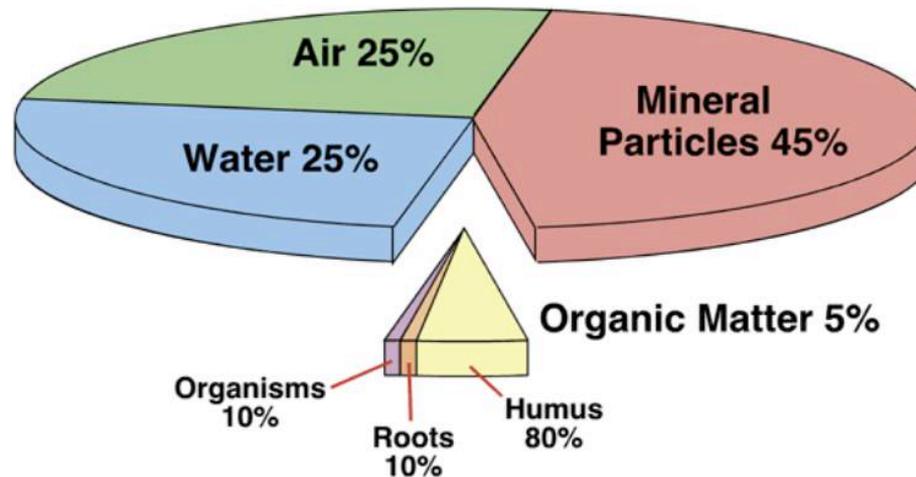
2017 Educational Theme

The NACD Stewardship and Education Committee's
2017 stewardship theme is
"Healthy Soils Are Full of Life!"



What is Soil?

Soil is the upper layer of the Earth's surface in which plants grow. It is made of tiny rocks, clay, minerals, and humus (the remains of dead plants and animals). Soil also contains air and water.



Why are soils important?

Soils are the foundation for everything that we are and do. From the clothes we wear, the food we eat, to the houses we live in, every person and thing gets its start from the soil!

Healthy soils are important for growing our food. We need healthy food to live and grow.

Plants need healthy soil to live and grow.

Some foods we eat grow above the ground (like tomatoes), while others grow below the ground (like potatoes).



Where do soils come from?

Soils don't have parents like we do, but they do have parent materials. Parent materials in soils are rocks and minerals that have been broken up into tiny pieces. Soils can be many different colors because they come from many different rocks and minerals.

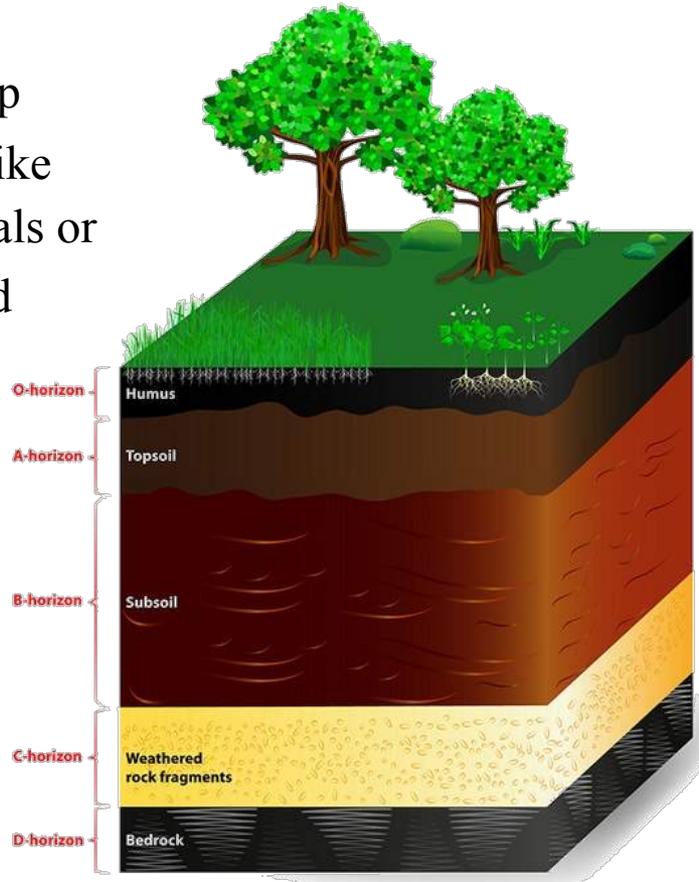


What are soils made up of?

Soils are made up of layers that are called horizons.

The **O Horizon** is a thin top layer of organic material like decomposing plant materials or the remains of animals and feces.

The **A horizon** is commonly referred to as topsoil. It is usually dark brown in color and rich in nutrients.



The **B horizon** is often referred to as subsoil. It contains minerals or organic matter that has been carried down from upper horizons by water.

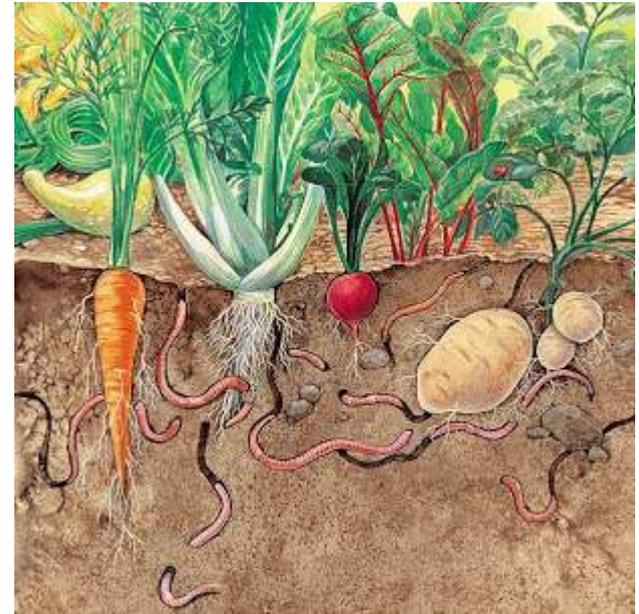
The **C horizon** is the parent material of the soil composed of broken up bedrock or sediments.

The **R layer** is the unweathered parent material of the soil.

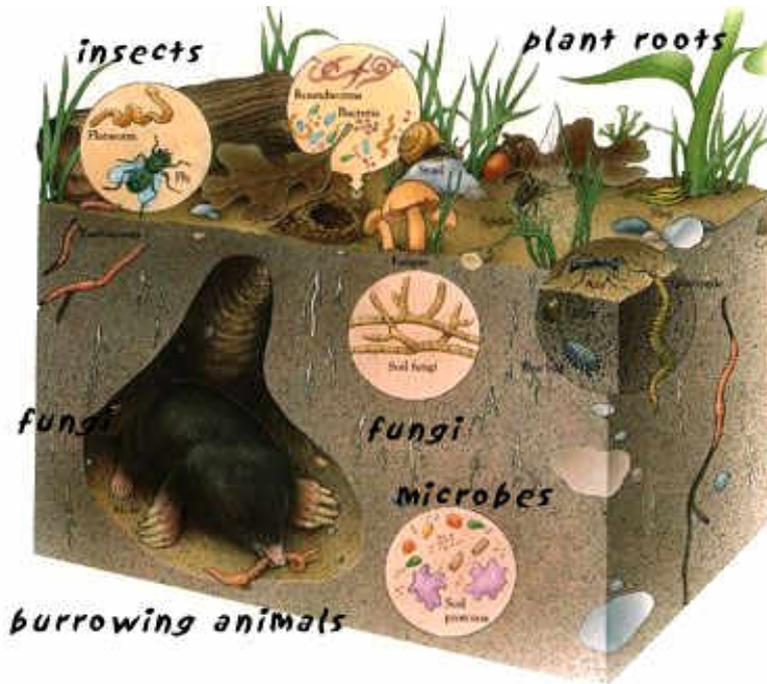


Soils are alive!

Lots of bugs, worms, and other critters live in the soil. Some are so small you need a magnifying lens to see them.



Worms living in your yard, garden, or farm field are a real good sign that you have healthy soil. They make holes that help water and air get deep into the soil.



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SOILS
ARE FULL OF LIFE!

What is soil erosion?

Take a look outside after it rains. Look at the water in rivers, in ponds, or running along the roads. The water may be clear or muddy. If it is muddy, soil is being washed away and mixing with the water. This is soil erosion. Soil is being carried away by rainwater. If you see soil erosion happening in your yard, try planting some plants or trees. Roots from plants and trees help hold soil in place, preventing erosion.

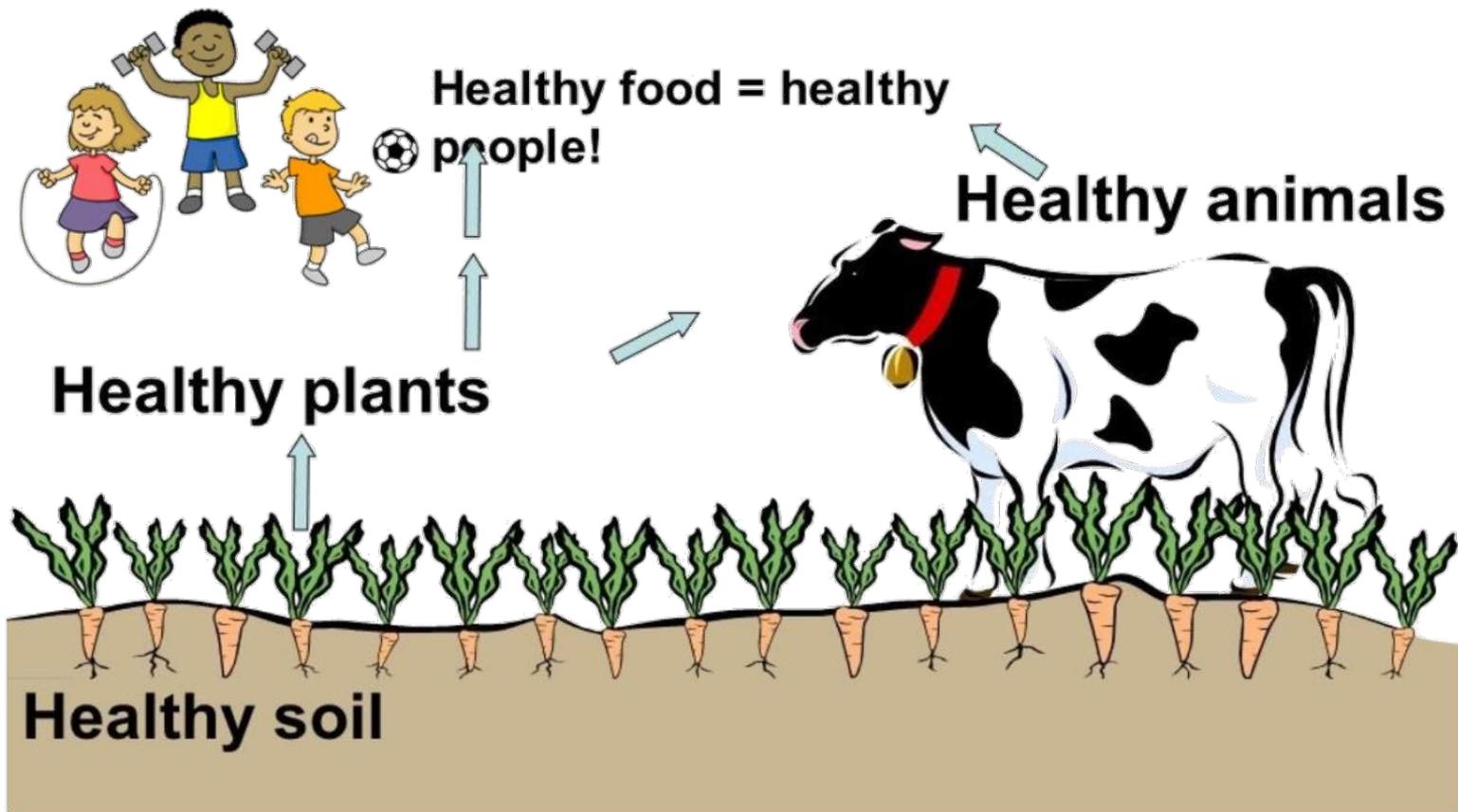


What is soil conservation?

Soil conservation is when you prevent soil erosion by planting new trees and plants and take steps to take care of them. It is important to keep our soil in place and healthy, otherwise we wouldn't be able to plant the crops that are necessary to feed all of the people and animals on earth.



Healthy Soils – Healthy People



How does food get from the soil to your spoon?

Getting food from the soil to your spoon takes a lot of hard work by many people. The food you eat comes from plants and animals grown by a farmer or raised by a rancher. Then food is moved from fields to processing and packaging plants and finally to stores or restaurants where it can be sold.



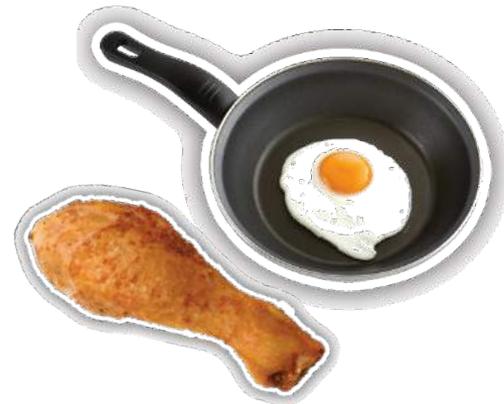
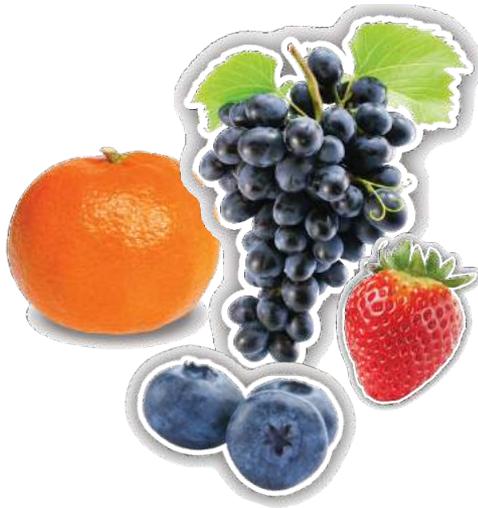
How does food get from the soil to your spoon?



HEALTHY
SOILS
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What food should I eat each day to be healthy?

Your body needs healthy food from all five food groups every day – fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy and protein.



HEALTHY
SOILS
ARE FULL OF LIFE!

Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

National Association of
Conservation Districts

Soil Facts

- It can take up to 1,000 years to form an inch of top soil.
- One tablespoon of soil has more organisms in it than people here on earth.
- Not all soil is good for growing plants.



- There are thousands of different types of soil across the world. The USA alone possesses more than 70,000 varieties of soil!
- Soil acts as a filter for underground water, filtering out pollutants.
- Soil is at the bottom of the food chain, yet it is the cornerstone of life on earth.



Keeping the Soil We Need

Taking good care of our soil is the best way to make sure that we have the soil we need for food, water, air, clothes, and many other things. Nutritious and good food can only be produced if our soils are healthy living soils.

Contact your local conservation district to find out what **YOU** can do to help protect your soil.

