DR. DIRT'S SOIL TESTS ANYONE CAN DO AT HOME · TEST 1 OF 11

The Jar Test

What is your soil made of: sand, silt or clay?



Time: 5 minutes, then wait 1 to 2 days

Kids and grown-ups together

You will need

- ☐ A clear jar with a lid (tall and straight-sided is best)
- ☐ About 1 cup of soil from your garden
- ☐ Water
- ☐ 1 teaspoon of dish soap (it helps the bits come apart)
- ☐ A marker and a ruler

Try it

1. Pick out rocks, sticks and roots.
2. Fill the jar one-third full of soil. Add water until it is two-thirds full, then the soap.
3. Put the lid on tight and shake hard for 3 minutes.
4. Set it down where it won't be bumped. After 1 minute, mark the top of the bottom layer: that's **sand**.
5. After 2 hours, mark the next layer: that's **silt**.
6. When the water clears (1 to 2 days), mark the top layer: that's **clay**.

What it means

Mostly sand

Water and food drain away fast. Compost helps it hold on.

Mostly silt

Smooth and rich, but it crusts and packs down when left bare.

Lots of clay

Holds water and food, but gets sticky and short of air. Roots and compost open it up.

About even

That's called loam, and most plants love it.

Floating bits

Bits of old leaves and roots: organic matter, food for soil life.

> **In Hawai'i:** Volcanic soils can stay cloudy for days and the layers may look blurry. That's the ash, not a mistake.

***Wonder**: Which layer is the thickest in your jar?*

My result