How To Determine Soil Type

- Determining soil type is important when choosing the right trees and plants for your site.
- Use the following soil texture test to determine soil type of your site.
- When using TreePeople recommended tree and plant lists, the soil type is indicated.

Let’s get started

1. Push mulch and organic matter away to reach the mineral soil.
2. Dig out a handful of soil. Remove any rocks and sticks.
3. Add a little water and knead the soil to break down any chunks. Form a ball.
4. The soil is at proper consistency when it feels moldable, like moist putty.
5. Follow the flow chart on the next page.

You’ll need the following:
- Shovel or trowel
- Water

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Soil Texture by Feel Flow Chart

START

Place a handful of soil (without organic matter or rocks) in the palm of your hand. Add a few drops of water at a time and knead the soil to break down all the chunks. Soil is at proper consistency when it feels moldable, like moist putty.

Does the soil stay in a ball when squeezed?

NO

Is the soil too dry?

NO

Is the soil too wet?

NO

SAND

YES

Using your thumb, gently push and squeeze the soil over your index finger, creating a ribbon of soil. Try to create the ribbon with uniform thickness and width. Allow it to extend and break from its own weight. Can you form a ribbon with the soil?

NO

LOAMY SAND

YES

NO

NO

Does soil make a weak ribbon, < 1" before breaking?

YES

Does soil make a strong ribbon, > 2" long before breaking?

YES

Does soil make a medium ribbon, 1-2" long before breaking?

YES

Thoroughly wet a pinch of soil in the palm of your hand. Rub it with your index finger.

Does soil make a weak ribbon, < 1" before breaking?

NO

Does soil make a strong ribbon, > 2" long before breaking?

NO

Does soil make a medium ribbon, 1-2" long before breaking?

NO

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