

Make & eat soil profile

Here's what you'll need

- at least four different types of cold breakfast cereal, such as Kix, Rice Krispies, Cocoa Krispies and raisin bran
- large clear plastic cup
- milk
- spoon

Remember

- wash your hands
- clean up when you're through

Using breakfast cereal, you can make a mock soil profile showing the different layers you could see if you dug a deep hole in the earth. While soil in different places can be very different, most soils can be divided into layers.

Large, light-colored cereals like Kix make good parent material; smaller light- or medium-colored cereals like Rice Krispies make good subsoil. Use a darker cereal like Cocoa Krispies for the topsoil. Something with texture, like raisin bran, makes a good leaf litter layer.

First place in a about 2-3 tablespoons of the Kix-type cereal. These are like the rocks in the ground.

Next, put in the smaller, light cereal, like rice cereal. This is like the subsoil, which is not as dark and rich as the topsoil. Put in about 1-2 tablespoons.

The topsoil comes next, so use a dark, small cereal to represent that rich earth. Another 1 to 2 tablespoons is fine.

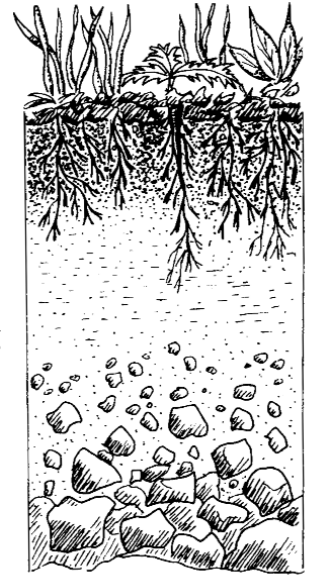
Sprinkle a little of the flake cereal on top to represent leaves and debris on the humus layer.

Now you have a cereal soil profile.

Got milk? Pour about one-third of a cup of milk in the cup. Watch the milk as it flows through the cracks to the bottom of the cup. That is called percolation. That's when the water fills up the spaces between the soil particles. If the space is all filled, the ground is soggy or even flooded. When the ground is frozen, like it is in the spring time in Alaska, the water cannot go all the way to the aquifer (groundwater) beneath and within the parent material layer. When the ground thaws, this water goes in the ground.

Percolation is not just important because it allows water to reach the roots of plants. It is also very important because the soil filters the water as it percolates through.

But your profile isn't made of soil; it's cereal. So eat and enjoy.



Utah Agriculture in the Classroom



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