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It takes a very long time for soil to form, and the formation depends on different factors, including the topography of the land and the climate of the surrounding area. There are different kinds of soil with different characteristics. One of the main ways that these things can differ is in their texture: is it more like sand, silt, or clay? Soil is composed of layers that we call horizons. Different types have different numbers of horizons. In which horizon do plants and other organisms make their home? This is where nutrients on Earth are recycled, including important nutrients like carbon and nitrogen. Different kinds of soils in different locations may absorb, hold, release, change, and/or purify Earth's water. It also filters water. Over millions of years, erosion shapes the landscape. Erosion can form hills when displaced material gets shifted and piled up somewhere else. Why is erosion a problem for farmers? Decomposers produce enzymes that break down plant and animal waste laying on the surface of the Earth into smaller parts. Soilborne diseases like Rhizoctonia canker, black dot, Verticillium wilt, and common scab can make plants sick and unsuitable for eating. Because they are available in small amounts and only needed by living organisms in small amounts, we call these nutrients trace elements. What's wrong with monoculture? The process by which water reaches the subsoil where plant roots are located, as well as the movement of water down past the root zone, is called permeability. Ponding is the holding back or damming up of water to form a pond or small lake. Organisms that participate in the decomposition process are called decomposers. There are more than a hundred thousand kinds of decomposers. What is the relationship between climate change and decomposition? Erosion can pull valuable nutrients out of the soil and concentrate them in other areas, for example, in bodies of water, the quality of which then becomes compromised. Which of the following is NOT a consequence of excess salinity? We say that we have food security when everyone has enough safe and nutritious food to eat. What four major elements make up 99% of the human body? This resource focuses on soil horizons and soil profiles. Students read through the information sheet on soil horizons and analyse an image of a soil profile. They are then asked to create their own visual representation of a soil with six horizons using colours and symbols using the data provided. View Assign Share Link Report Introduction: A soil horizon is a layer of soil that has different properties than the layers above and below it. For example, soil horizons will differ in texture, color, composition, and structure. If you dig a hole from the surface of the ground downward and examine the layers of soil, you will be looking at a soil profile. A soil profile is a vertical set of soil horizons. Due to different formation conditions, not all soil profiles will look the same or have every soil horizon. The diagram below represents a soil profile. Each of the five major soil horizons are labeled. The O horizon is the uppermost layer of soil. It is composed mostly of "leaf litter" or leaves and organic materials that have fallen on the ground. As decomposers, like worms, break down the litter, it turns into a nutrient rich material called humus.The next layer down in the A horizon. It is made of topsoil. It is a mix of humus, minerals, and sediments and has a high level of biological activity. The A horizon is nutrient rich and vital for crop growth. Poor soil management can lead to erosion of topsoil. The B horizon is directly under A horizon. It is composed of subsoil. Compared to topsoil, subsoil contains less organic material like humus and more mineral materials like clay. Rainwater washes minerals down from the upper soil horizons and deposits them here.The C horizon is the first soil layer that forms. Bedrock breaks into smaller pieces as it is exposed to weathering over time. The broken rock pieces or debris is called regolith. At the bottom of our soil profile is the R horizon. This is bedrock, or solid rock, upon which soil forms.Directions for This Lesson: In this lesson, you will learn about soil horizons. First, try the practice questions to determine what you already know. Then, watch the video lesson to learn more. Finally, apply what you learned in the activity and practice sections.Required Video:Practice:Practice what you have learned by completing the post-lesson worksheets. Related Worksheets: Related Lessons: Additional Resources: Video Playback Not Supported The first step to getting the soil in your garden right is figuring out what you have. There are three general types of soil:Clay: This type of soil is composed of very fine particles that pack together tightly, allowing very little water to drain out and making it difficult for roots to dig in. If you squeeze clay soil in your hand, it will create a hard sticky ball. To modify clay soil, add organic material that will loosen the particles up and add nutrients to the soil (humus for example.)Sand: Sandy soil is very loose and granular so it holds little water and few nutrients. Sand will sift right through your hands when you try to compress it. Sand needs organic material added to help it absorb moisture and contribute nutrients (compost should do the trick.)Loam: This type of soil is the gardener's dream soil because it is the perfect blend of sand, clay, and organic matter. Loam is typically dark in color and will compress but not form a hard mass. For good measure you can still add organic material to boost the nutrient levels in loam. Soil covers Earth's land. It is a vital natural resource. Soil is a thin layer in which plants can grow. Soil is not all the same. It has different layers. The layer on top is made of humus (HYOO-muss). Humus is dark brown or black. It is made of the remains of plants and animals that were once alive. As they rot, they become part of soil. This top layer of soil is called the O horizon. O stands for organic. Organic matter came from living things. This layer may be only about one or two inches deep. The O horizon is "O" so important for having healthy soil. The second layer from the top is called the A horizon. It is a mixture of humus and small bits of minerals. It is dark colored, too, but not as black as humus. People often call this layer "topsoil." In the A horizon, you will find plant roots. Living things like earthworms, ants, and beetles make their homes here. Microorganisms like bacteria and fungi are found here, too. Microorganisms are too small to see without a microscope. They break down, or decompose, organic materials. They are important to healthy soil. This layer can be eight to twelve inches thick. The A horizon is "A" home to living things. . . . Print Entire Reading Comprehension with Questions Live worksheets > English > Science > Soil > Soil Horizon Finish!! Please allow access to the microphone Look at the top of your web browser. If you see a message asking for permission to access the microphone, please allow. Close

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