



Class Activity



Determine Your Soil's Texture

An easy way to determine soil texture is to shake some soil in a jar of water and watch it settle. Sift some soil to remove chunks, pebbles and debris. Put a cup of sifted soil into a straight-sided quart jar. Add one tablespoon each of table salt and laundry detergent. (These act to disperse the negative charge of the clay particles and help eliminate binding between different soil particles.) Add water until almost full. Secure the lid tightly and shake vigorously for five to ten minutes (or long enough to give everyone a turn). Put the jar where it won't be disturbed. As the particles settle, sand will reach the bottom first, silt will be next and clay will be the slowest to settle. When the water is clear, all the particles have settled, and students can determine the relative percentages of each by the thickness of the layers.

SOIL
TEXTURE

