






**National Department of Agriculture
Institute of Natural Resources (an Associate of the University of
Natal)**



Test your soil







If you want to plant vegetables, fruit trees, maize or any other crop, you must first find out whether the soil is clay, sandy or loamy because crops do not always grow well in all kinds of soil.

<p>Clay soil</p> <p>Water does not pass easily into clay and plant roots do not grow easily. Therefore fruit trees do not grow well in clay soil.</p>	
<p>Sandy soil</p> <p>Water passes quickly into sandy soil, roots grow easily but the soil becomes dry quickly. Therefore fruit trees will need nutrients and regular watering.</p>	
<p>Loam soil</p> <p>Contains sand and silt. Roots grow easily. It holds water and nutrients, therefore fruit trees grow well.</p>	

How to test the soil

◆ Take a handful of soil. Feel the soil. Is it rough, smooth or sticky?

◆ Wet the soil in your hand and try to make a sausage. Then look at the following table and decide what kind of soil it is.

What does the soil feel like?	Can it roll into a sausage?	What does the sausage look like?	Type of soil
Very rough	No		Very sandy
Rough	Cannot bend		Sandy
Rough	Can bend a little		Sandy loam
A little sandy, quite smooth but not sticky	Can bend halfway round		Loam or silt loam
A little sandy, quite smooth and sticky	Can bend more than halfway round		Clay loam or sandy loam
Smooth and sticky	Can bend into a ring		Clay

If you find that the soil in your garden has too much clay or too much sand, you can improve it by adding lots of compost or manure.

For further information contact your nearest extension officer or the Institute of Natural Resources, Private Bag X01, Scottsville 3209
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