

SOIL

Soil vs. Dirt

SOIL	DIRT
Made up of three components: minerals (from rocks), organic matter (remains of plants and animals), and living organisms (that reside in soil)	Soil that has lost the characteristics that give it the ability to support life
Capable of supporting plant life, and is vital to life on earth.	i.e. Tracking dry dirt inside

ROLES SOIL PLAYS:

- Media for growth for all plants
- Emits and absorbs gases (i.e. carbon dioxide, methane, water vapor, etc) and dust
- Habitat for animals that live in soil
- Process recycled materials (including carbon)
- Absorb, hold, release, alter, and purify most of the water in the terrestrial system
- Acts as a living filter to clean water before it moves into an aquifer

HEALTHY SOIL

WHY IS HEALTHY SOIL IMPORTANT?

- Healthy soils are productive soils
- Reduce production costs
- Protects natural resources
- Reduce nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increases efficiency and sustains wildlife



Harvard Pilgrim
Health Care Foundation



CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY SOIL

- Loose, fluffy; not compact
- Good depth
- Good drainage
- Large population of diverse organisms
- No chemicals or toxins

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY SOIL?

- Holds more water, and loses less water to runoff and evaporation
- Healthy plants!

MAKING A PLAN FOR HEALTHY SOIL

- Do not disturb
- Keep it covered
- Cover Crops
- Rotate Plants

HOW TO IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Plant diversity means diversity in soil
- Manage soil more by disturbing less
- Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil
- Keep soil covered as much as possible
- Add compost or soil additives each year

