

2026 POSTER CONTEST

Soil: Where it all Begins

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District
and
National Association of Conservation District's
Soil Information, Rules, Poster Ideas and Tips



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Soil.
Where it all Begins





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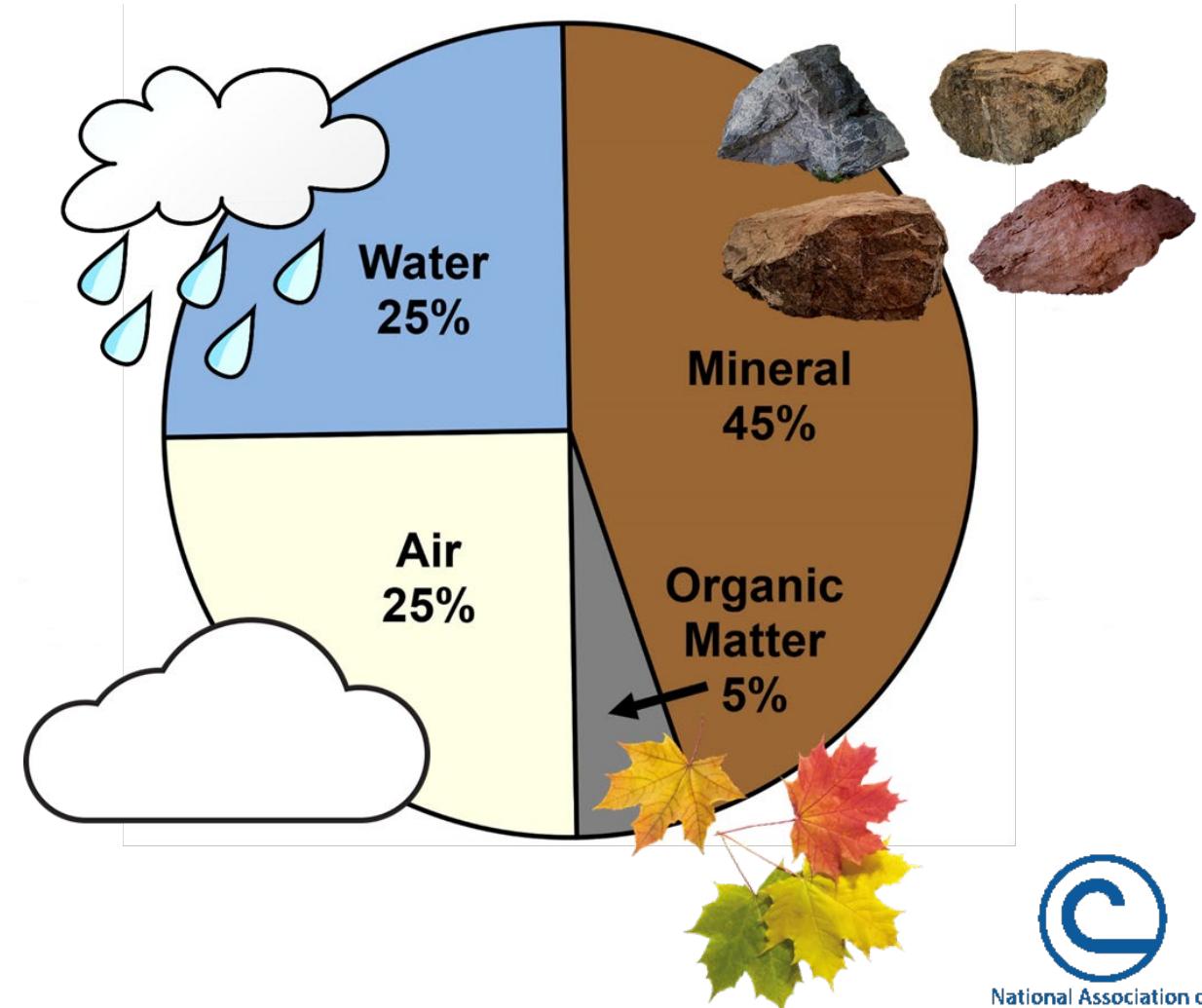
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Soil Composition



What is soil made up of?

Soil is a dynamic natural body made up of mineral and organic materials, as well as living organisms. It is a living, complex ecosystem at the surface of the earth's crust that provides the necessary ingredients for plants to grow.



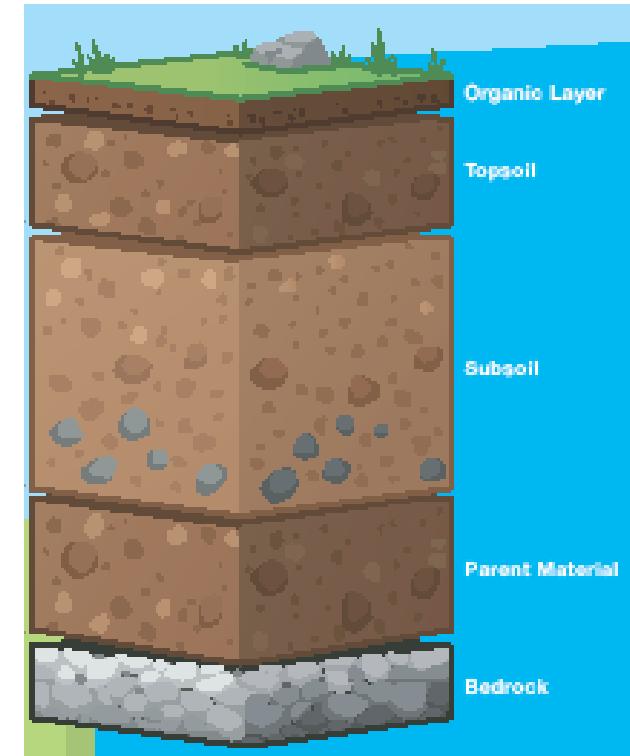
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The Layers of Soil

Soil is more than just one layer. It has multiple layers, just like a cake, that are called horizons.

- The **0 Horizon** is a thin top layer of **organic material** like decomposing plant materials or the remains of animals.
- The **A horizon** is commonly referred to as **topsoil**. It is usually dark brown in color and rich in nutrients.
- The **B horizon** is often referred to as **subsoil**. It contains minerals or organic matter that have been carried down from upper horizons by water.
- The **C horizon** is the **parent material** of the soil composed of broken up bedrock or sediments. Soil is formed in this layer as the rocks weather or break apart into smaller pieces.
- The **R layer** is **bedrock**, the unweathered parent material of the soil. This is the support system that all of the soil layers rest on.

Soil is important to us because it produces food, fiber, shelter, fuel and medicine, as well as provides a surface on which to build.



What makes soil healthy?



Organic matter – dead and decaying plants and animals - add nutrients to the soil, which makes it healthy!

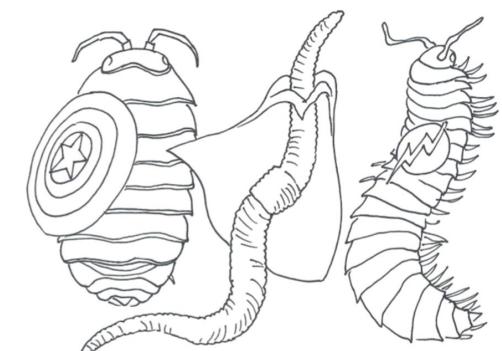
A healthy soil is a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.





Soil is a Habitat!

Soil provides a habitat for animals. Lots of bugs, worms and other critters live in the soil. Some are so small you need a hand lens to see them. Earthworms living in your yard, garden or farm field are a very good sign that you have healthy soil. They make holes that help water and air get deep into the soil, making it easier for roots and plants to grow. Worms, roly polys and millipedes are "Soil Superheroes", eating the dead plant material and turning it into rich, healthy soil!



Healthy Soil: Healthy Life



We rely on soils for food.

In fact, 95% of food production relies on soil!



Healthy soils are like a filter!

They can help to clean the water that we depend on to survive.



Soils may seem sterile but they are actually teeming with life!

A teaspoon of soil can actually contain more microorganisms than there are people on Earth.

Over 1,000,000 earthworms can be found in one acre of cropland!



A quarter of the Earth's species are found in soils!

This includes critters like small mammals, worms, fungi, and bacteria. Scientists are still learning about and discovering organisms that live in soil!



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Healthy soils can help the environment!

Soil that's in good shape can prevent floods and mitigate drought because they store water.



We use natural resources from the soil.

Actions like recycling can help us reuse these resources so we can protect soils.



How does healthy soil help us have a healthy life?



The food we eat comes from plants and trees that grow in soil. Farmers, ranchers and gardeners take good care of the soil on their land. Then, healthy soil grows the healthy food we need to have a healthy life.



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How Do Farmers Help Soil?

- **Planting cover crops:** These plants can protect and put nutrients back into the soil, they aren't grown for food.
- **Rotating crops:** Farmers plant different crops on the same land at different times of the year. This keeps soil healthy by keeping the soils nutrient rich, since not all the same nutrients are being used with each crop.
- **Keeping soil intact:** Tilling is a process that breaks up the soil to make it easier for crops to grow. But, breaking up soils means that it may be washed away by rain or blown away by the wind. Keeping soil intact by having no-till fields keeps soils in place and keeps moisture in the soil.
- **Using buffer zones:** A buffer zone is an area of vegetation between fields that are used to grow crops. Sometimes they are also near streams and lakes. These green spaces can keep soils in place and out of bodies of water.



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Do Your Part: Take Care of Your Soil!

Only about 10% of Earth's land surface has suitable soil for producing our food supply, supporting housing, cities, schools, hospitals, supplying the air to breath and more! Our healthy life above ground depends upon healthy soil below our feet! It is vital that we practice good soil conservation.

Mulch is Good for Soil



Compost Creates Healthy Soil



Watch Out for Erosion!



Plants Protect Soil



What is Soil Science?

Soil science is the study of soil as a natural resource. This includes understanding soil formation, classification, and mapping; learning about the unique properties of soil including the physical, chemical and biological properties and how fertile it is; and understanding how soil can be managed based on these characteristics.

If you like science, being outside and exploring the environment, becoming a soil scientist might be the career for you!



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Additional Soil Resources from Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District:



- [Splendid Soil](#)
- [Soil Superheroes](#)
- [Composting](#)
- [Soil Tunnel Explanation Video](#)
- [Soil Erosion Simulator Demonstration Video](#)



“Out of the long list of nature’s gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.” – Hugh Hammond Bennett



2026 Poster Contest

Soil: Where it all Begins

Healthy soils are the foundation for all life on Earth. Soil grows our food, filters our water, supports wildlife habitats, and provides the foundation for our communities. Without soil, there would be no farms, forests, or places for humans and animals to thrive.

This theme helps us remember that caring for soil is the first step in protecting all our natural resources and keeping the land healthy for the future.

The goal of this contest is to use some of the information from this presentation to create a poster to educate others about the importance of soil and our impact on this important resource!





Franklin County Poster Contest Details

The Poster Contest is open to all K-12 grade public, private and homeschooled students in Franklin County

Important Dates:

Contest *begins* on Monday, January 12th

Contest *ends* on Friday, April 10th

County winners will be *announced* around Earth Day, April 22nd



K-1st Grade

2nd-3rd Grade

4th-6th Grade

7th-9th Grade

10th-12th Grade

Contest Categories:

Hand Drawn Posters:



Digital Posters:
7th – 12th Grade



Poster Contest Guidelines



Hand-Drawn Posters:

- Any type of 8 1/2" x 11" paper may be used, however, to further the conservation message you are encouraged to reuse paper that has been used on one side.
- Any form of coloring, writing, painting or drawing may be used.
- No pictures of commercial origin are permitted.

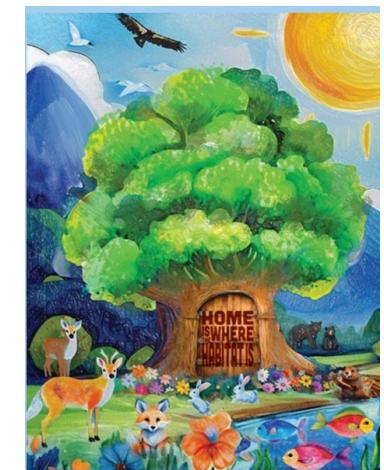


Digital Posters:

- **Middle and High School Students (Grades 7-12):** There is a separate category for those interested in creating an original poster, with original artwork, using a digital format/device. These posters will be judged using the same criteria as the hand-drawn posters.



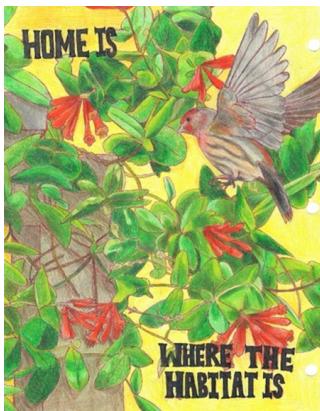
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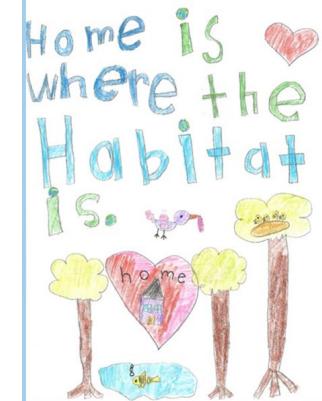


Poster Contest Rules

- The theme: “*Soil: Where it all Begins*” must be included (written) on the poster design.
- Each student should put his/her name, grade, school or group, and teacher's or leader's name on the back of the poster.
- Each teacher or youth group leader will select up to 5 posters from the class or group as their representative(s) in the county-wide competition.
- Posters will be judged on:



Judging Criteria	Weight
Conservation Message	50%
Visual Effectiveness	30%
Originality	10%
Universal Appeal	10%



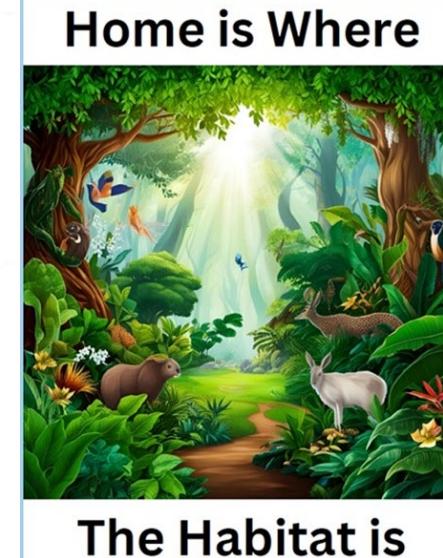
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WHAT MAKES A GOOD POSTER?

- Attracts attention
- Original design
- Simple and concise message
- Uses colors and white space effectively
 - Large, easy to read text
 - Neat and clean



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When forming ideas for your poster...

- Research soil and soil health and use the information you find
- Look around your school and neighborhood for ideas
- Use some of the important issues from this presentation
- Brainstorm ideas and make a list
- Use the theme as your title:



“Soil: Where it all Begins”



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Additional Contest Details

- **Posters may be submitted via mail, in person or Google Drive:**

Mail/In-Person: Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District

1404 Goodale Boulevard, Suite 100 Columbus, OH 43212

Google Drive: During registration, indicate you would like to submit your posters electronically. A Google Drive link with instructions will be emailed to you.

Individual files should be saved: Student Name-Grade-School-Teacher

- **Winning posters may be:**

- Copied and used in Franklin Soil and Water promotional materials and press releases.
- Displayed at county-wide events, municipal meetings and through electronic media displays

- **County winners** will receive certificates of recognition, prizes and an invitation to the **Awards Ceremony** at Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.



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For Additional Information...

Visit our website:

[Conservation Poster Contest - Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District \(franklinswcd.org\)](http://franklinswcd.org)

Contact our Environmental Educators:

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Katie Bennett kbennett@franklinswcd.org



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