



Soil

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A thin layer of material on the Earth's surface in which plants have their roots

Mineral Matter

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The weathered rock particles that help plants grow

Humus

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The dark, jelly-like substance that forms when plants and animals decay

O-horizon

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The layer of soil that contains organic matter such as plant litter and humus





A-horizon

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The fertile, upper layer of soil where most of the organisms live

B-horizon

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The layer beneath the A-horizon, where there is less humus

C-horizon

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The parent material that consists of solid rock and rock particles

Leaching

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When the minerals and nutrients in the A-horizon are washed down into the B-horizon





Parent material

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The bedrock that is broken down by weathering to form soil

Brown earth soils

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Dark brown soils found in lowland areas that developed on the boulder clay from the last Ice Age

Podzol soils

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Acidic, infertile soil found on the floors of coniferous forests in cold and wet areas

Gley soils

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Sticky grey soils that develop where the bedrock is impermeable





Peaty soils

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Dark soils that develop in cold upland areas with high rainfall, and lowland areas with poor drainage

Tropical red soils

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Red soils found in areas with hot and wet climates in tropical/equatorial zones

Deforestation

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The removal of trees from a forested area for economic use

Over cropping/ over grazing

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When crops are continuously grown on land or when the land is exposed to intensive grazing





Carbon Sink

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The ability to absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere

Silt

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A medium sized particle found in soil

Clay

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The smallest particle found in soil

Heavy tilling

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The large-scale use of machinery in crop farming





Plant litter

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The layer of decayed plant material

Leaching

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The washing of minerals through the soil into the B horizon

Hardpan

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The hard, impermeable layer of minerals built up after leaching

Contour ploughing

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When land is ploughed along the contours rather than up and down the slope

