

Feel your soil texture



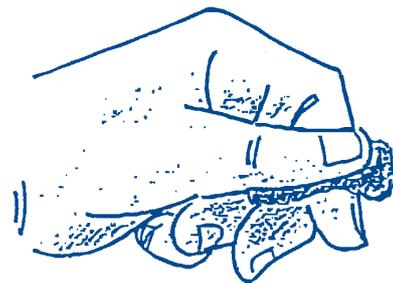
1. Take a small handful of soil



2. Add enough water to make a ball. If you can't make a ball, the soil is very sandy. If the ball is too wet, add more soil



3. Feel the ball with your fingers to find out if it is gritty (sand), silky (silt) or plastic/sticky (clay)



4. Roll the ball and with your thumb gently press it out over your forefinger to make a hanging ribbon.



5. If you can make a short ribbon your soil texture maybe loamy, a mixture of sand and clay



6. The longer the ribbon the more clay is in your soil

Once you have determined the feel of the soil (plastic, silty, sandy, or smooth) and made a ribbon, compare the length of the ribbon on the table over page to find out your soil type.

Guide to common soil textures

Field texture Grade	Behaviour of moist bolus (soil ball)	Ribbon length (mm)	Approx clay content %
Sand	Coherence nil to very slight, cannot be moulded; sand grains of medium size, single sand grains stick to fingers	nil	<5%
Loamy sand	Slight coherence; sand grains of medium size; can be sheared between thumb and forefinger to give minimal ribbon of about 5 mm	About 5mm	About 5%
Clayey sand	Slight coherence; sand grains of medium size; stick to fingers; discolours fingers with clay stain	5-15mm	5 to 10%
Sandy loam	Bolus coherent but very sandy to touch; will form ribbon; dominant sand grains of medium size and are readily visible	15-25mm	10 to 20%
Loam	Bolus coherent and rather spongy; smooth feel when manipulated but with no obvious sandiness or 'silkeness'; may be somewhat greasy to touch if much organic matter present	25mm	About 25%
Sandy clay loam	Strongly coherent bolus; sandy to touch; medium size sand grains visible in finer matrix	25-40mm	20 to 30%
Clay loam	Coherent plastic bolus, smooth to manipulate	40-50mm	30 to 35%
Light clay	Plastic bolus; smooth to touch; slight to moderate resistance to ribboning shear	50-75mm	35 to 45%
Light medium clay	Plastic bolus; smooth to touch; slight to moderate resistance to ribboning shear	75mm	40 to 50%
Medium clay	Smooth plastic bolus; handles like plasticine and can be moulded into rods without fracture; has moderate resistance to ribboning shear	>75mm	45 to 55%
Heavy clay	Smooth plastic bolus; handles like stiff plasticine; can be moulded into rods without fracture; has firm resistance to ribboning shear	>75mm	55% +

SOURCE: Adapted from McDonald et al., 1990, *The Australian Soil and Land Survey: Field Handbook 2nd edition*, Inkata Press, Melbourne.