

Soil Ribbon Test

The Ribbon Test can help you determine the texture of your soil. Soil texture differs depending on the amount of sand, silt, and clay is in the soil. Texture can be classified as sandy, clay or anything in between. Loam soil is equal amounts of sand and clay. Sand particles are the largest and most coarse, which means sandy soils hold the least amount of water. Silt and clay are more fine with smaller particles. Clay soil has the finest particles, which means it holds the most water. Loam soil retains moisture, but doesn't get waterlogged.

Use this test to determine if you soil is more sandy, clay, or a combination (loam).

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.



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



4. Reroll 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 is loamy, a mixture of sand and clay.



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



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Texture Notes

Sand: Gritty, does not form a ball

Loam: Forms a ball, feel is somewhat smooth, some organic matter may be present (small pieces of broken down leaves, etc.), can form up to 1 inch ribbon

Clay: Easily molded into a ball, smooth/greasy feel, forms up to 2 inch ribbon.