

**The “Soil Squeeze”
and “Soil Shake”
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Take a trip around your garden to take soil samples, learn what kind of soil you have, and see if it is ready for digging and planting!

Soil Squeeze:

Have each child gently dig in the garden soil and get a small amount that will fit in the palm of their hand. Give the soil a firm squeeze, then open your hand. One of three things will happen:

1. It will fall apart as soon as you open your hand, because it is sandy and dry enough to plant!
2. It will hold its shape when squeezed, but when given a light poke, it will crumble. Lucky you—this means you have luxurious loam soil that is dry enough to be planted!
3. It will hold its shape when squeezed, but sticks together in a hard ball even when poked. This means you have clay soil, or loam soil that is still too wet to plant. Wait a few more days to try again, and you might also need to add some more compost!

Soil Shake:

Materials needed- 2 or 3 clean, quart-size glass or clear plastic jars with tight-fitting lids.

1. Chose several different locations in the garden, as far apart as possible. Have the children dig down to the native soil in each area, and use it to fill each jar halfway to the top.
2. Have the children fill up the rest of the jar with plain tap water, screw the cap on tight, and take turns shaking it thoroughly. Have the last child quickly place the jar right side up on a flat surface to settle.
3. The sand will settle immediately before their eyes, because it's the heaviest and largest soil particle.
4. The silt layer will settle on top of the sand, and they'll be able to see the difference by observing the color and particle size of each layer.

5. The clay layer may take several hours or several days to completely settle on the very top. It is usually either a bluish or yellowish color. Any organic matter that is in the soil will float on or in the water.