

Soil texturing by hand - A dichotomous key

Using a moist sample of soil, assess its texture as follows.

1. Does the soil feel gritty? Can you feel hard particles between your fingers?	YES	Go To Q.2
	NO	Go To Q.6
2. Does the soil refuse to stick together at all when you try to mould it?	YES	SAND
	NO	Go To Q.3
3. Is it difficult to roll the soil into a ball? Does it keep collapsing in your hand or bits keep falling off?	YES	LOAMY SAND
	NO	Go To Q.4
4. Does the soil feel partially soapy or silky as well as gritty?	YES	SANDY SILT LOAM
	NO	Go To Q.5
5. Does the soil mould to form a cohesive ball with a matt, rather than a shiny surface?	YES	SANDY CLAY LOAM
	NO	SANDY LOAM
6. Does the soil feel soapy and silky? Does it mould to form an easily deformable ball?	YES	SILT LOAM
	NO	Go To Q.7
7. Does the soil mould to form a strong ball with a matt, rather than a shiny surface?	YES	Go To Q.8
	NO	Go To Q.10
8. Is the soil also slightly gritty?	YES	SANDY CLAY LOAM
	NO	Go To Q.9
9. Is the soil soapy and silky?	YES	SILTY CLAY LOAM
	NO	CLAY LOAM
10. Does the soil mould like plasticine? Does it give a shiny surface when rolled? Is it very sticky when you make it wetter?	YES	Go To Q.11
	NO	A high organic content may be masking the soil's mineral texture.
11. Is the soil also gritty?	YES	SANDY CLAY
	NO	Go To Q.12
12. Is the soil also smooth and buttery?	YES	SILTY CLAY
	NO	CLAY