

Durham Badger Group
SOIL TYPE KEY

The following key is a rough field guide for classifying soils into broad soil categories. To use it, start from Section A, and then move to the part of the key indicated in brackets, according to the texture of the soil. The follow the steps in that section until you have decided the type of soil you have.

Key:

A. Rub between fingers.

1. gritty (B)
2. sticky..... (C-i)
3. silky (C- ii)
4. sticky and gritty (C-iii)
5. none of these, but black (D)
6. none of these, not black (LOAM)

B. Try to mould into a roll.

1. cannot – will not stick = SAND
2. roll formed and marks skin
 - a) roll breaks when bent double = LOAMY SAND
 - b) roll does not break
 - i) surface can be polished with thumb = SANDY CLAY
 - ii) surface cannot be polished = SANDY LOAM

C. Roll soil into a ball and polish with thumb.

- i) sticky
 - a) ball resists bending = CLAY
 - b) ball fairly resistant to bending = CLAY LOAM
- ii) silky
 - a) ball fairly resistant to bending = SILT
 - b) ball won't stick together well = SILT CLAY LOAM MIX
 - c) ball smooth; fairly resistant to bending = SILT LOAM
- iii) sticky and gritty; can be balled and polished = SANDY CLAY LOAM
- iv) silky and gritty; can be balled but not polished = SANDY SILT LOAM

D. Peat

- i) firm sticks together well, tough, not plastic, plant structures visible, often spongy = FIBROUS PEAT
- ii) may appear fibrous, soft, becoming paste-like under pressure = PARTLY DECOMPOSED PEAT
- iii) plastic when wet, powdery when dry, no plant remains visible = UNSTRUCTURED PEAT

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