

Healthy Habitat for Schools

Fact Sheet 8

Know your soil

The soils present in your school yard will depend on the history of the site. Some common local soils include sandy loams near the coast, heavy clays further inland, and a variety of soil types in areas along rivers and creeks that regularly flood.

Your school may also have soils that have been brought in from elsewhere. You find out what soils are present by digging test holes, measuring the pH of the soils and examining the texture of the soils (e.g., how much sand or clay is in the soil).

Determining your soil type and its characteristics will help you to choose suitable



long-living plants and create a low maintenance garden. More information on soil type can be found in fact sheet 7.

Sandy soil has free-draining large particles; good aeration and plants thrive in it. However they cannot retain water or nutrients well. Sandy soils can be improved by adding organic matter such as animal manure or garden compost.

Clay soil has small particles to retain water and nutrients well. Although its potential to have drainage problems can be difficult for plants to grow. Clay soil can be improved by adding organic matter, coarse sand and gypsum. Gypsum should be added at a rate of 0.5 to 1kg per square metre of soil.

Reference:

Yates Garden Guide (2006), HarperCollins Publishers, Australia.



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