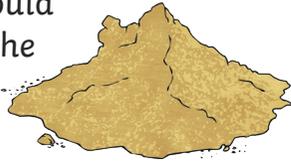


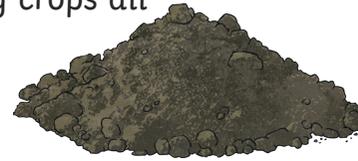
Sandy

Like the name suggests, sandy soil is mostly made up of, wait for it... sand! Because of the fine grains, water drains well through this soil and since it stays pretty dry, you can easily get the fork through it. Of course, that means any plants growing here will need to be well watered. A fertiliser should also be used to top up the nutrients that are so easily swept away.



Loam

Mix, mix, mix!
Loam soils are a good mixture of sand, silt and clay. This soil holds on to most of its nutrients and keeps enough water to help plants get what they need. It also drains enough to avoid waterlogging. This makes loam soil an allotment's best friend when it comes to growing crops all year round!



Clay

The trickiest of all to work with, clay based soils are known for being cloddy thanks to their ability to hold on to water. Of course, this in means they can become waterlogged and muddy all too easily – a gardening nuisance. On the upside, clay soils also hold on well to nutrients so fewer artificial fertilisers are needed to support crop growth.



Types of Soil

Silt

With medium sized particles, silt soils hold on to enough water to allow for good plant growth while draining enough to avoid waterlogging. The particles allow silt soil to compress (squash down) very easily, making it difficult to dig, plant and de-weed. On a positive note, it tends to maintain enough nutrients to make it fertile, supporting crop growth.



Chalk

As you might expect, chalk based soils contain a lot of calcium carbonate (chalk). It can be challenging to grow some plants in these types of soils as many plants prefer to grow in more acidic conditions (think vinegar!). Water drains quickly through chalk soil so plants cannot get enough moisture.



Peat

What happens when moss, shrubs and grasses die? They form peat! Very rarely found naturally in an allotment plot, peat is generally formed near bogs and marshlands. Here plants do not fully decay, leaving the matter that's left extremely high in nutrients. Gardeners often choose to buy peat and add it to their existing soil to improve its fertility.

