

Soil

Soil is important because it...

- enables plants, vegetables and fruit to grow
- locks in carbon
- helps clean away chemicals
- holds back floodwater
- supports an array of life forms including [earthworms](#) which in turn provide food for larger wildlife including thrushes, moles, buzzards, badgers, robins and frogs
- process recycled nutrients, including carbon, so that living things can use them over and over again

Did you know?

- A single gram of healthy soil contains millions of organisms including earthworms, nematodes, mites, insects, fungi, bacteria and actinomycetes.
Source: <https://soilsolution.org/10-soil-facts/>



We are losing our fertile soil

- The British Isles have taken 3 billion years to develop into their current form and include a greater diversity of rock and soil types than anywhere else on Earth of comparable size, but our soils are being eroded from the landscape and carried out to sea.
 - Intensive agriculture has made soils is reliant on artificial fertilisers to grow food, rather than being nourished with organic matter that encourages worms and other organisms that break it down and improve the structure for holding water and providing nutrients to plants.
 - Irreplaceable peat bogs and wildlife habitats are being destroyed to produce peat-based compost for gardening and food-growing.
- This has a negative impact on our wildlife as the number of organisms and insects supported by soil continues to decline.

How Wildlife Trusts help

- Advise farmers and landowners to help them to care for their soils.
- Look after 100,000 hectares of wildlife-rich sensitively-managed soils on our nature reserves.
- Restore peatland soils, for example by blocking drains and rewetting areas of land. We are also calling for a ban on the use of peat in horticulture.
- Lobby for measures to help our soils recover, including setting a target of increasing organic matter in UK arable and horticultural soils by 20% over the next 20 years (1% a year)
- Ploughing less often or stopping tillage altogether in some circumstances.
- Replacing artificial fertilisers with natural organic matter.
- Ensuring crop rotation, and planting catch cover crops.
- Lower Smite Farm run by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust is restoring the soil after years of intensive farming. <https://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reserves/lower-smite-farm>

How people can help

1. Make your own compost at home and add it to the soil in your garden to encourage earthworm activity.
2. Buy peat-free compost to help preserve our remaining peatlands. Always check the label!
3. Go wild for worms – [read more about them and how to encourage more of them](#)
4. Consider buying organic food and products (the Soil Association awards an organic stamp to help people identify organic produce and organisations.)

Helpful links

- www.un.org/en/events/soilday/
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/soils-and-carbon
- www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-go-peat-free
- <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-go-peat-free>
- <https://www.soilassociation.org>

