

Alison Course: Understanding and Improving Soils

Assessing Soil Texture by Feel

Begin by placing approximately one tablespoon of soil in the hand before adding water until it is the consistency of moist putty.

1. Can you roll it into a ball?
Easily.....go to qu 2
With great care.....**LS (Loamy sand)**
No.....**S (Sand)**
2. What happens when the ball is pressed between thumb and forefinger?
Flattens without falling apart.....go to qu 3
Tends to break up.....**S (Sandy loam)**
3. On further moistening, can the ball be rolled into a thick (5mm) cylinder?
Yes.....go to qu 4
No, it collapses.....**SL (Sandy loam)**
4. On further moistening, can the ball be rolled into a thin (2mm) cylinder?
Yes.....go to qu 5
No, collapses.....**SL (Sandy loam)**
5. Can the cylinder be bent into a horseshoe without cracking?
Yes.....go to qu 7
No.....go to qu 6
6. On remoulding with further moisture, what is the general feel of the soil?
Smooth and pasty.....**ZL (Silty loam)**
Round and abrasive.....**SZL (Sandy silt loam)**
7. Can a ring of 25mm diameter be formed by joining the two ends of the thread? (If necessary, remould with more moisture)
Yes.....go to qu 9
No.....go to qu 8

8. On remoulding with further moisture, what is the general feel of the soil?
- Very gritty.....**SCL (Sandy clay loam)**
- Moderately tough.....**CL (Clay loam)**
- Doughy.....**ZCL Silty clay loam)**
9. Without rewetting, can the surface be polished with the thumb?
- Yes, a high polish.....go to qu10
- Yes, but gritty particles noticeable.....**SC (Sandy clay)**
- No.....go to qu 8
10. On wetting thoroughly, how does the soil stick to your fingers?
- Very strongly.....**C (Clay)**
- Moderately strongly.....**ZC (Silty clay)**