

# Soil is **not** dirt

**Dirt** is what gets on our clothes or under our fingernails. Something to wash off, to get rid of. At a glance, dirt and soil may look the same, but there is a big difference.

## So, what on Earth is soil?

It is a complex mix of ingredients: minerals, air, water, and organic matter—countless organisms and the decaying remains of once-living things. Soil is made of life. Soil makes life. And soil is life.

**We want to keep and protect soil. Dirt is something we want to get rid of.**

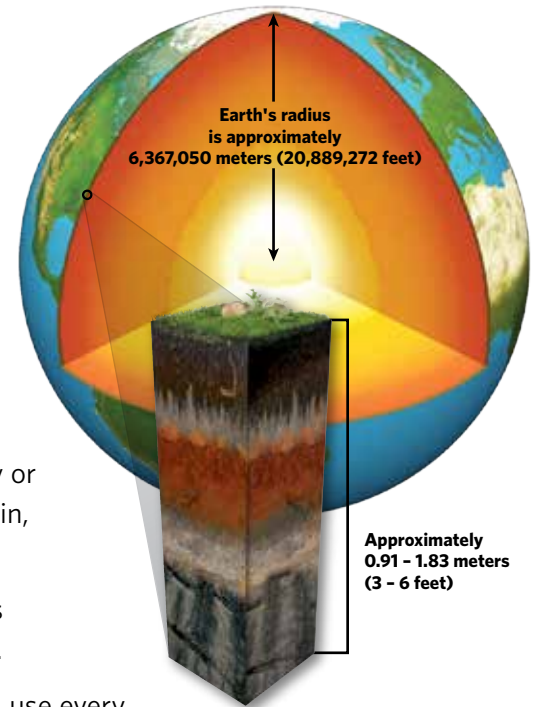


## THE SKIN OF THE EARTH

Soil is the thin outermost layer of Earth's crust. Like our own skin, we can't live without soil. Why?

- Most of our food comes directly or indirectly from plants anchored in, and nourished by, soil.
- Part of the oxygen we breathe is produced by plants living in soil.
- Much of the water we drink and use every day soaked into, and was filtered by, soil.
- And nearly everything we build is built on soil, and often with it.

**Like our skin, it is easy to take soil for granted—and to damage it.**



**In our solar system, Earth is a unique planet. It has vast oceans, abundant life, and a breathable atmosphere. And, it has soil!**

## SOIL: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL **Soil means different things depending on who you are.**

**FARMER**  
**It's where healthy crops grow.**



*Soil is at the base of everything we do: our food, our clothes, even fuel for our cars. It's my job to use the soil in a sustainable way to provide all these things.*

**ENGINEER**  
**It's a foundation to build on.**



*Soils are the backbone of the world we live in. They range in strength from being able to support a skyscraper to not being able to support your own weight.*

**TEACHER**  
**It's a playground and science lab all in one.**



*We teach about soil as the foundation of life, vital for food production and a healthy environment.*