

DETERMINING SOIL TEXTURE BY FEEL

Put about two teaspoons of soil in the palm of your hand. Add water by the drop and knead soil to break down clumps. Soil is the proper consistency when "plastic" and moldable like putty. If it's too wet, add more soil. Now you're ready to use the key (links are all located on this page, so you can also scroll the page).



Does the soil remain in a ball when squeezed? [No?](#) [Yes?](#)

If **no**, then the soil is a **SAND**.

If **yes**, does the soil form a ribbon? [No?](#) [Yes?](#)

Place the ball of soil between your thumb and forefinger, gently push the soil with your thumb, squeezing it upward into a ribbon. Form a ribbon of uniform thickness and width. Allow the ribbon to emerge and extend over your forefinger, until it breaks from its own weight.



If **no**, then the soil is a **LOAMY SAND**.

**Sand and Loamy Sand are classified as SANDY textures
for the VT Soil & Land Judging Contest.**

If **yes**, does the soil make a . . .

[weak ribbon](#) (less than one inch long before it breaks)

[medium ribbon](#) (1-2 inches long before it breaks)

[strong ribbon](#) (over two inches long before it breaks)

>**Weak Ribbon.** Rub soil between fingers to feel for grittiness.

Very gritty . . . then it's a **SANDY LOAM**.

Very smooth and maybe a little gritty . . . then it's a **SILT LOAM**.

More gritty than smooth . . . then it's a **LOAM**.

**Sandy Loam, Silt Loam, and Loam are classified as LOAMY and SILTY textures
for the VT Soil & Land Judging Contest.**

>**Medium Ribbon.** Rub soil between fingers to feel for grittiness.

Very gritty . . . then it's a **SANDY CLAY LOAM**.

Very smooth . . . then it's a **SILTY CLAY LOAM**.

Neither gritty or smooth . . . then it's a **CLAY LOAM**.

>**Strong Ribbon.** Rub soil between fingers to feel for grittiness.

Very gritty . . . then it's a **SANDY CLAY**.

Very smooth . . . then it's a **CLAY**.

Neither gritty or smooth . . . then it's a **SILTY CLAY**.

**Sandy Clay Loam, Silty Clay Loam, Clay Loam, Sandy Clay, Silty Clay, and Clay are classified
as CLAYEY textures for the VT Soil & Land Judging Contest.**