

4 Soil

CultiAdvice

Dear Green Thumb:

My tomatoes are dying. They get plenty of sun and water. What am I doing wrong? — Tom G.

Dear Tom:

Check the **soil**. Tomato roots need the right amount of water and air. They don't do well in **sand** or **clay**. Both have the wrong **soil structure**. Sand particles are too loose to hold enough water. **Dense** clay prevents **aeration**. You need a **soil texture** in between those extremes. **Loam** with high **silt** is usually good. The other issue is nutrients. A soil's **parent material** determines what nutrients are in it. You can improve the nutrients by adding **humus**.



Get ready!

- 1 Before you read the passage, talk about these questions.

- 1 What kind of soil is there in your country?
- 2 Why is good soil important?

Reading

- 2 Read the newspaper advice column. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 1 ___ Tomatoes grow well in clay.
- 2 ___ Aeration does not occur in clay.
- 3 ___ Humus adds nutrients to soil.

Vocabulary

- 3 Fill in the blanks with the correct words and phrases from the word bank.

Word BANK

aeration clay loam humus soil structures

- 1 Some _____ hold more water than others.
- 2 Crops don't grow well in pure _____ soil.
- 3 Use _____ to add nutrients to soil.
- 4 _____ provides roots with air.
- 5 _____ is a mix of three soil types.

- 4 Match the words (1-6) with the definitions (A-F).

- 1 ___ soil
- 2 ___ sand
- 3 ___ silt
- 4 ___ soil texture
- 5 ___ parent material
- 6 ___ dense

- A a material made of small pieces of rock and mineral
- B a material that is deposited by water
- C rock and minerals that eventually form soil
- D a layer of material that plants grow in
- E the size of particles in a soil
- F having a lot of material in a small space

- 5 Listen and read the newspaper advice column again. What do you need to take into consideration when planting tomatoes?

Listening

- 6 Listen to a conversation between a customer and clerk in a plant supply store. Choose the correct answers.

- What is the customer buying at the store?
A soil C houseplants
B pots D vegetables
- Why does the clerk recommend Wonder Grow?
A It contains no clay.
B It has dense soil structure.
C It supports vegetable growth.
D It has good aeration and holds water.

- 7 Listen again and complete the conversation.

Clerk: Hi. Can I help you with anything?
Customer: Yes. I need some 1 _____.
Clerk: Is this for indoor or outdoor plants?
Customer: It's for indoor plants.
Clerk: What kinds of plants is it for? Houseplants? flowering plants? vegetables?
Customer: I have some spider plants. They need to be put in 2 _____.
Clerk: 3 _____, you should use Wonder Grow. It has 4 _____ and 5 _____ well, too.
Customer: Okay, 6 _____. Thanks for your help.

Speaking

- 8 With a partner, act out the roles below based on Task 7. Then, switch roles.

USE LANGUAGE SUCH AS:

I need some ...

What kind of plants is it for?

You should use ...

Student A: You work in a plant supply store. Talk to Student B about:

- type of plants
- soil types
- soil description

Student B: You need soil for your plants. Answer Student A's questions.

Writing

- 9 Use the conversation from Task 8 and the newspaper advice column to fill out the product description.

Product name: _____

_____ can be used for _____
or _____.

It supports _____ and _____
growth.

Best of all, it has _____ and _____
better than any product.

