



# DIG IT! *The Secrets of Soil*

## EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

Starting July 19, 2008, visitors to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History can journey into the skin of the earth and explore the amazing world of soils in the new exhibition, **Dig It! *The Secrets of Soil***. Completely familiar yet largely unknown, soils help sustain virtually every form of life on Earth. Still, it is said that we know more about the dark side of the moon than we do about the Earth beneath our feet. **Dig It!** will transport visitors to the world of fungi, bacteria, worms, and countless other organisms. Visitors will discover the amazing connections between soils and everyday life and think about this hidden world in a whole new way.

## EXHIBITION FEATURES

In the "***At Home in the World of Soils***" gallery, visitors explore the connections between soil and culture. While we walk on soils every day, we rarely think about how soils affect our daily lives. This gallery explores these connections with a scale model of a typical suburban house lot that highlights soils in and around our homes. Nearby, an evocative video features soils as the "secret ingredients" in thousands of everyday items including medicine, food, fiber, paint, cosmetics, and pottery.

The "***Underneath it All***" gallery explores soils in a broader perspective. A large topographic model illustrates the role of soils in residential, urban, and agricultural areas. Touchable soil samples provide closeup looks of two very different urban soils found right here in Washington, D.C. Exhibit panels examine how soil management can help meet modern day demands for food production, infrastructure construction, and environmental protection.

"***The Big Picture***" area gives the global view, symbolized by a centrally-placed art sculpture depicting soils at the center of Earth's water, nutrient, life, and carbon cycles. A world map and computer interactive stations highlight surprising global connections to soils. Nearby, the "***Get Soil Savvy!***" display uses dramatic images and video to explore the importance of soils in land management and conservation.

Curious visitors can also dig into life, death, and decay in the "***Matters of Life and Death Theater***," where a ten-minute video follows an edgy detective story about the micro- and macroscopic soil food web. Outside the theatre, visitors learn more about how microorganisms that inhabit soils impact our planet. Visitors can activate two soil "breathalyzers" (infrared gas analyzers) and detect the amount of carbon dioxide produced by soil organisms in two very different environments.

In "***Sizing Up Soils***," visitors will get the dirt on soils in an array of fun interactives and exhibition stations. A "***Chef's Challenge***" kitchen features two flamboyant "soil chefs" who create two very different soils from the same ingredients. Visitors can find their "home earth" in a display of 54 soil samples, or "monoliths," representing each state in the nation, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Visitors become soil detectives and use clues to deduce what landscapes three mystery soils support. Other interactives explore soil color, texture, particle size, and minerals.

**Dig It!** is located on the second floor of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of Natural History*