

Name: _____



Soil Types of the United States

- 1 Mountain Soil
- 2 Desert Soil
- 3 Prairie Soil
- 4 Glacial Soil
- 5 Wetland Soil
- 6 River Soil
- 7 Temperate Soil

Soil Types of the United States

In the contiguous (connected) United States, there are 7 general soil types. Each one can be classified according to certain characteristics.

Mountain. Mountain soils are filled with rocks and stones that were pushed up from underneath the earth's surface. They are usually thin, and gray or light brown in color. These soils are often eroded by water flowing down the mountainside.

Desert. Desert soils are often coarse. They contain lots of minerals. Little vegetation can survive in these soils because they do not hold enough water. But they can be used for farming if they are irrigated.

Prairie. Prairie soils are brown, dense, and very fertile. Tall grasses that naturally grow in these soils put down deep, thick roots that can survive when droughts make the land completely dry. Great crops of corn and wheat grow in prairie soil.

Glacial. Glacial soils were pushed down from Canada by glaciers during the last ice age. They are mostly brown and stony. Some glacial soil has been enriched by grassland cover and is good for farming. Other glacial soils must be fertilized to grow crops.

Wetland. Wetland soils are often rinsed of nutrients by the water that surrounds them. The constant decay of plants and animals replenishes these soils, however, and they are good for growing crops. They are dark brown and very dense.

River. River, or alluvial, soils are rich and fine-grained. They are formed from eroded topsoil carried along by the flow of water. They contain many minerals and are very fertile.

Temperate. Temperate soils are found in many parts of the country. Most farmers grow their crops in this loose, brown, and fertile soil.

In addition, the other two United States, Alaska and Hawaii, each have a unique soil type not found in "the lower 48". Alaska primarily has **arctic** soil; Hawaii has a **tropical** soil.

Arctic. Arctic soils are thin and light in color. These soils, and the water they hold, are frozen for many months of the year. Because the soil is so cold, things cannot easily decay in it. Arctic soils contain many bits of stone and rock that have broken apart in the icy temperatures.

Tropical. Tropical soils are dark and wet. Hawaii has the only true tropical soils in the United States. Although tropical soils are not always very fertile, those in Hawaii are enriched with ash from volcanoes which makes them excellent for farming.