teacher exercise: Getting to Know Your Super Soil

overview

A step-by-step explanation of three, hands-on soil tests.

objectives

Teachers will learn:
- pH test
- Soil texture test
- Percolation test

resources

- An online review of these tests illustrated by the Colorado State’s Cooperative Extension: http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/gardennotes/214.html

learning activity

1. Understanding your soil’s composition, how well it drains, and if it has any nutrient needs is vital to a garden’s health. Use the resource links for a sample step-by-step process every gardener should practice and use:

- pH test, either by litmus paper, observation of soil profile or predominant flora (preexisting garden beds only), or with an electronic pH meter.
- Soil texture test, which is most easily done either as a squeeze test or jar test.
- Percolation test, or drainage test, to see how water drains through your soil.

Optional: Send your soil to a laboratory to be tested.

A soil test by your local land grant university cooperative extension. This will test both macro- and micro-nutrients, as well as toxins such as heavy metals. It is highly recommended when you bring in new soil from unknown sources, as well as after a season or two of gardening when deciding what you should use to amend your garden beds.