



## Painting with Soil

**Teaching Objective:** *“To have fun and to gain a deeper appreciation of soils - one of our most important natural resources.”*

**Introduction:** Soils are one of our most important natural resources. They also are important for the beauty the many soil colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks, pottery and art work. The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

### Materials:

Soil (dried in air)  
Hammer/mallet  
Mortar and pestle  
Paper cups (4 oz.)  
Pencils

Ink pens (black, different tip sizes)  
Paint brushes (different kinds and sizes)  
Artist acrylic (clear gloss medium) (Elmer’s glue works too)  
Sponges and rags  
Water color paper  
Masking tape

### Procedure:

#### Soils

1. Gather many colors of soil.
2. Air dry or oven dry on low heat.
3. Place some of the crushed soil into a mortar. Use a pestle to crush the soil into a fine powder. Repeat to crush all of the different colored soils.
4. Place some of the powdered soil in a paper cup. Wrap a knee high hose over the top. Turn cup upside down over a piece of paper and gently shake out finely powdered soil.
5. Place the different soils in paper cups - notice the colors and textures.

### Artwork

1. Lightly sketch art work on water color paper with pencil. When satisfied with composition use ink for permanent lines.
2. With masking tape, carefully tape paper edges to table or board. This is done so that the artwork will dry flat.
3. Pour small amount of artist acrylic in small paper cups. Add small amounts of finely powdered soil. You may also want to add a few drops of water to the soil mix.
4. Experiment with depth of color and mixing the different soils.
5. Use different sizes and kinds of paint brushes, sponges and rags. Experiment and have fun.
6. Layering the colors. When your art work is dry, you may want to apply another layer of soil paint.
7. You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your art work.

**Activity Time:** The estimated time is about 1 or 2 hours.

Courtesy of the USDA National Resources Conservation Service

# Soil Science Society of America | K-12 Outreach Websites

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## K-12 Soil Science Teacher Resources

Soil Science Society of America

"How can I stand on the ground every day and not feel its power?  
How can I live my life stepping on this stuff and not wonder at it?  
—William Bryant Logan

Logan

### SOILS SUSTAIN LIFE

Soil is the reservoir on which most life on earth depends, as the primary source of food, feed, forage, fiber, and pharmaceuticals.

Soil plays a vital role in sustaining human welfare and assuring future agricultural productivity and environmental stability. The study of soil as a science has provided us with a basic understanding of the physical, chemical, and biological properties and processes essential to such a complex ecosystem.

The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) is a professional scientific society, made up of soil scientists, educators, and consultants focused on promoting soil science, including enhancing soils topics in schools. SSSA is pleased to provide teachers with these Soil Essentials:

#### TEACHERS

As part of our partnership with the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Smithsonian Institution, materials were developed entitled Dig It! The Secrets of Soil. Please visit their education site for additional resources.

Earth Science Week Activity Materials are also available from current and past Earth Science Weeks!

Follow the Lesson Plans and Activities links for more ideas and plans.

#### AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Looking for useful tools to assist in the soil education of your class? SSSA has numerous resources to help you talk to students about soils:

- I "Heart" Soils Rulers
- Soils Bookmarks (Currently Out of Stock)
- I "Heart" Soils Stickers
- Soils Overview
- Soil Science Career Poster
- Careers in Soil Science Brochure

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K-4

5-8

9-12

### PLAY FUN SOIL GAMES

Have fun while learning more about soil by playing these fun games that we've collected from around the web!

PLAY NOW!

### EXPERIMENT WITH SOIL

If you're looking for some ideas for a Science Fair, or just looking for something interesting to do - check out these cool soil experiments.

GET STARTED

### EXPLORE CAREERS

What does a Soil Scientist do? What kinds of careers can you get with a degree in Soil Science? Click here to hear from the scientists themselves.

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