



Dear Educator,

This file offers views of some of the worksheets in our “About Soil” thematic unit. The cover for an eWorkbook is shown followed by the preview pages.

The “About Soil” unit offers [16 pages](#).

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# About Soil



# About Soil

Soil is one of the elements that controls life on earth.



- **Plants take their food and water needs from the soil.**
- **All animals get their food needs from these plants or the animals that eat them, or both.**



Many plants can survive with low light, but they can not survive without the nutrients and water they receive from the soil. Other plants can survive with low levels of water, but still must have good soil to keep them healthy. A very few plants like cactus, can thrive in bad soil and a little water.



The mineral nutrients in the soil are like food to the plants. The minerals help them to grow into healthy plants.

Today people have learned to grow plants without soil. This is called hydroponics. The plants are grown with their roots in water that has mineral nutrients.



The amount of land on the earth that is usable by people to grow food and build homes and towns are only 4% of the surface area. Of this 4%, only about the top four feet is usable for farming. This is referred to as the **topsoil**.

Land that is the right kind for food crops is called **arable**. This tiny bit must support all people, animals, and plants that live on the Earth.

# About Soil

Thousands, of kinds of small creatures live their lives under the soil. Worms and nematodes help break down decaying plant and animal matter. Bacteria and fungi also play a part in making the soil rich.



Moles, mice, shrews, and gophers are some of the animals that live in the topsoil. Many species of insects spend part, or all, of their lifecycle in the soil. The digging and tunnels of these animals and insects create areas for water and air to settle. The soil clumps are broken up and are able to provide more room and nutrients for plant roots.



The use of too much chemical fertilizers and pesticides by farmers, ranchers, and gardeners can cause big breaks in this beneficial cycle.

Nature friendly products and methods are available. The use of non chemical plant and insect control methods is called **organic land management**.

Do some research on the Internet or in books. Look up a about organic gardening. Write a little of what you learn on the lines below.

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## Criss Cross

Can you fit these words into the criss cross?  
Use a pencil so you can erase if you need to.

soil            water            humus            chemicals  
plants        dirt                rock                erosion

