

# The answer lies in the soil

Soil sieving is a great activity for all ages to explain and demonstrate the importance of soil and good husbandry. You can talk about the role of earthworms in maintaining the health of the soil. Explain practices you undertake to reduce compaction or poaching and that without the elements there would be no soil! You could also dig a soil profile pit to help demonstrate soil structure and root growth.

## You will need

- Sieves of various sizes – try to find sieves with different size holes, secondary schools may have these
- A spade
- Trowels
- White trays or plastic plates
- Magnifying glasses
- To provide hand washing facilities for messy hands including running water, liquid soap and paper towels
- Soil map of your farm
- Invertebrate ID book

## When and where to do this

Do this activity as part of any farm tour based on food production. It will be very rewarding as there is always something interesting turning up and your audience will be amazed by what you will find. Ideally you will have enough sets of equipment for everybody to have a go, or if you do this as a demonstration, make sure you involve different people as helpers, and there needs to be plenty of open space.

If you have been able to get hold of a set of soil sieves, do a demonstration which separates the soil particles by size. You must have dry soil for this so it is a good idea to dry some out the night before!

Each group could then dig out some soil and try to sieve it by shaking it into a tray or onto a plate. You will notice the different sized soil particles. You will find earthworms, so encourage your visitors to look at them with the magnifying glass. You may find other living things so use your ID books.



You can tell your visitors about soil cultivation and how it is done on a large scale on the farm – ask them how they do it in their own gardens. You could also have some cultivation equipment on show.

## Suggested messages

- Healthy soil is required to grow healthy food for people and for animals
- Soil needs care and attention
- Changing conditions in the climate have led to soil erosion – flooding, wind blow
- Earthworms are essential for healthy soil

Look at The Adventures of Herman the Worm on Google