

## Qualitative Soil Health Indicators

Indicator	Best Assessed	Poor	Medium	Good
<b>Earthworms</b>	Spring / Fall. Good soil moisture.	0-1 worms in shovelful of soil. No casts or holes.	2-10 in shovelful. Few casts, holes or worms.	10+ in shovelful. Lots of casts and holes in clods.
<b>OM Colour</b>	Moist soil.	Topsoil colour similar to subsoil.	Surface colour closer to subsoil colour.	Topsoil clearly defined, darker than subsoil.
<b>OM Residues</b>	Anytime.	No visible residues.	Some residues.	Noticeable residues.
<b>Root Health</b>	Late spring (rapid growth stage)	Few thick roots. No subsoil penetration. Off colour (staining) inside root.	Roots well branched. A few roots grow through cracks and reach into subsoil.	Roots fully branched and extended, reaching into subsoil. Root exterior and interior are white.
<b>Soil Tilth Mellowness Friability</b>	Good soil moisture.	Looks dead. Like brick or concrete, cloddy.	Somewhat cloddy, balls up, require multiple raking for good seedbed.	Crumble well, can slice through, like cutting butter. Spongy when you walk on it.
<b>Water-holding capacity</b>	After rainfall. During growing season.	Plants stress two days after a good rain.	Plants stress a week or so after a good rain.	Holds water for a long period of time.
<b>Drainage Infiltration</b>	After rainfall.	Water sits for a long time, evaporates more than drains.	Water sits for a short period of time, eventually drains.	No puddling, no runoff, water moves through soil steadily. Soil not too wet, not too dry.
<b>Crop Condition (how well it grows)</b>	Growing season. Good soil moisture.	Problem growing throughout season, poor growth, yellow or purple colour.	Fair growth, spots in bed different, medium green colour.	Normal healthy dark green colour, excellent growth all season, across bed.
<b>pH</b>	Anytime, but at same time of year each time.	Hard to correct for desired crop.	Easily correctable.	Proper pH for crop.

Source: Adapted for home gardens from *Building Soils for Better Crops* by Magdof and van Es