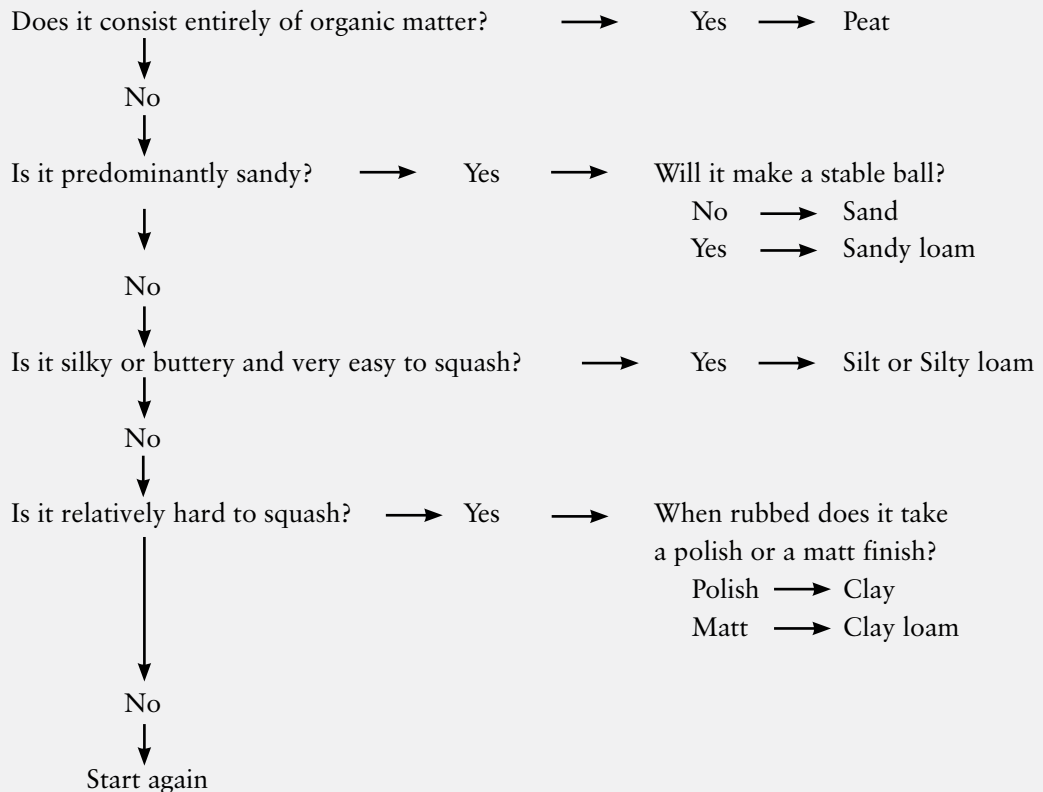


HOW TO TEST TEXTURE

Take about a teaspoonful of soil, knead it till it loses all structure and roll it into a ball. It needs to be at just the right moisture content to form the strongest ball it can. Too wet and it squidges, too dry and it crumbles. You may need to moisten it and if it's a bit too wet you can dry it by kneading it for longer. In fact if you knead a sample for too long you may need to re-moisten it. It's important to get the moisture content right because a sample that's too wet will feel more silty than it really is.

When you have the strongest ball you can make with that soil ask yourself this series of questions:



One mistake which is easy to make when you start using the finger method is to always answer Yes to the question 'Is it very easy to squash?' All soil is easy to squash and this question is relative. Once you've handled a few contrasting samples you'll get used to it. The feel of a really silty soil is unforgettable once you know it but hard to put into words.

This gives you the basic types, which are certainly enough to get started in soil sampling. But finer distinctions can be significant and you can take it a stage further. A soapy feeling tells you there's some silt in a soil which is predominantly sandy or clayey. This soapy feeling is quite different from the stickiness of clay. If you can feel it in your sample you can redefine it as follows:

Sandy loam	→	Sandy silt loam
Clay loam	→	Silty clay loam
Clay	→	Silty clay

In the same way, if you can feel a bit of sand in a soil which is predominantly clay, you get:

Clay loam	→	Sandy clay loam
Clay	→	Sandy clay