4.5 Soil Texture

Mineral particles in soil are grouped according to size into sand (2 - 0.05 mm in diameter), silt (0.05 - 0.002 mm) and clay (less than 0.002 mm). The proportion of individual mineral particles present in a soil is referred to as texture. Soil texture is described by means of 13 textural classes defined according to the relative proportions of sand, silt and clay (Figure 5). The presence of larger particles (diameter is greater than 2 mm) in soil is recognized as:

gravelly - particles ranging from 0.2 to 7.5 cm in diameter

cobbly - rock fragments ranging from 7.5 to 25 cm in diameter

stony - rock fragments ranging from 25 to 60 cm in diameter or if flat 38 to 60 cm long

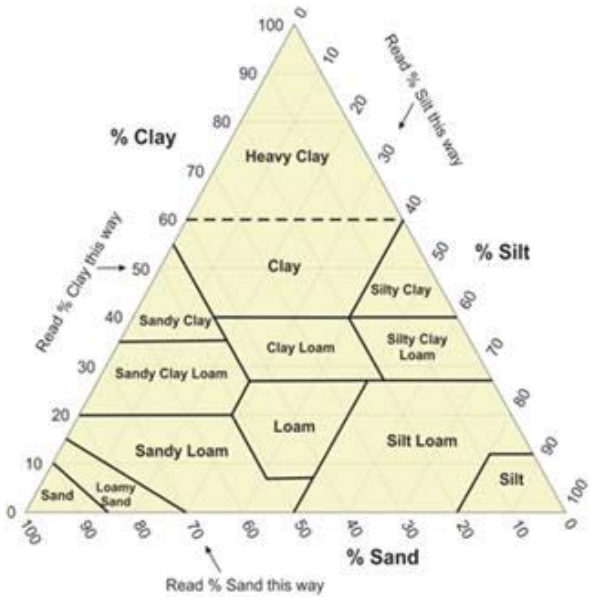

Figure 5. Soil Texture Triangle

Soil texture strongly influences the soil's ability to retain moisture, soil fertility and ease or difficulty of cultivation. Water moves easily through coarse-textured (sandy) soils so little moisture is retained and they dry out more quickly than fine textured (clay) soils. As well, sandy soils do not retain plant nutrients as well as clay soils and are lower in natural fertility. Sandy soils are often characterized by loose or single grained structure, which is very susceptible to wind erosion. Clay soils have a high proportion of very small pore spaces, which hold moisture tightly and are usually fertile because they are able to retain plant nutrients. Clay soils transmit water very slowly; therefore, these soils are susceptible to excess soil moisture conditions. Textural class names are grouped as coarse, medium and fine (Table 8).

Table 8. Soil Texture Group

Texture group		Texture	
		Class	Symbol
Coarse	Very coarse	Very coarse sand	VCoS
		Coarse sand	CoS
		Medium sand	S or MS
	Coarse	Fine sand	FS
		Loamy coarse sand	LCoS
		Loamy sand	LS or LMS
		Loamy fine sand	LFS
	Mod. coarse	Very fine sand	VFS
		Loamy very fine sand	LVFS
		Coarse sandy loam	CoSL
		Sandy loam	SL or MSL
		Fine sandy loam	FSL
Medium	Medium	Very fine sandy loam	VFSL
		Loam	L
		Silt loam	SiL
		Silt	Si
Fine	Mod. fine	Sandy clay loam	SCL
		Clay loam	CL
		Silty clay loam	SiCL
	fine	Sandy clay	SC
		Silty clay	SiC
		Clay	C
	Very fine	Heavy clay (>60 %)	HC