

Dig In for World Soil Day 2026

**TACKLE SOIL
COMPACTION,
BOOST FOOD
PRODUCTION**

5 DECEMBER 2026

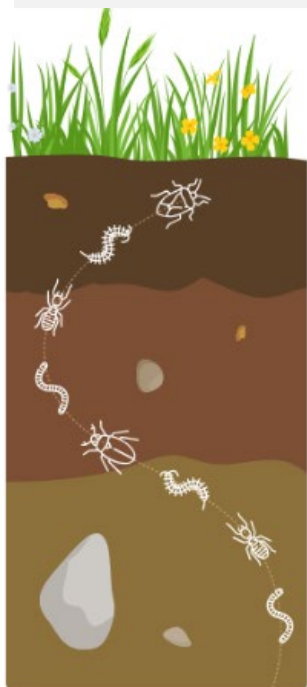


Test your soil health and help create our community soil mural

The United Nations recognises 5 December as World Soil Day, raising global awareness of the important role soils play in agriculture, healthy ecosystems and food security.

What can a calico strip tell us about soil health?

Calico strips can tell us a lot about the biological activity in our soils. Soil microbes are too small for us to see, but we can observe their activity by measuring how much they decompose calico strips buried in the soil. The cotton provides a food source for bacteria and fungi. The more the cotton breaks down, the greater the microbial activity in your soil. *Dr Mary Retallack, EcoVineyards*)



- **95%** of our food comes from soils.
- **33%** of soils are degraded.
- It can take up to **1 000 years** to produce just **2-3 cm** of soil.
- Soils supply **15 of the 18** naturally occurring chemical elements essential to plants.
- There are more living organisms in a **tablespoon** of soil than people on Earth.
- **2 billion** people worldwide suffer from lack of micronutrients, known as hidden hunger.
- Up to **58%** more food could be produced through sustainable soil management.
- Soil is home to nearly **59%** of Earth's species

Instructions

Help to create a community soil-health mural while testing the biological activity in your soil.

1. What's in your kit?

You will find:

- 3 calico strips
- Fluorescent marker tape
- 1 snap-lock bag
- 1 Reply-Paid envelope

2. Prepare your strips

- Choose three locations on your property.
- Using a marker pen, write your postcode and soil type, if known, on one end of the calico strip.
- Use a trowel or spade to make a narrow slit in the soil at each location.

3. Bury your strips

- Place the calico strip against the spade or trowel, with the marked end towards the handle and the bottom folded under the end.
- Gently push the strip into the slit and press the soil around it, leaving the marked end visible above the soil.
- Record the GPS location or use the fluorescent tape provided to mark each location.
- Leave the strips buried for 4–5 weeks.

3. Retrieve, rinse and dry

- After 4–5 weeks, put on gloves and carefully dig up each strip.
- Gently rinse off excess soil.
- Lay the strips flat and allow them to dry completely.
- Don't worry if your strips look tatty. That's exactly what we want! The amount of decomposition helps show how active your soil microbes have been.

5. Pack and return

- Place the completely dry strips into the **snap-lock bag**. You can add a dry sheet of paper towel to help keep moisture away.
- Place the bag in the reply-paid envelope provided and send to:

Karen Thomas
Melbourne Water
990 La Trobe Street
Docklands VIC 3008

The returned calico strips will be joined together to make a mural. The mural will be on display at our National Soil Day event and feature in social media posts.