



**'Essentially, All Life (on Earth)
Depends upon the Soil ...
There can be no life without soil
and no soil without life;
they have evolved together.'**

Charles E. Kellogg, USDA Yearbook of Agriculture, 1938

Soil is composed of living organisms, minerals, organic matter, air and water. Soil performs a number of key environmental, social and economic services that are vital to life by supplying water and nutrients to plants. At the same time soil protects water supplies by storing, buffering and transforming pollutants. **Soil is an incredible habitat.** It also provides raw materials, preserves our history and reduces the risk of floods. ***Without soil, the planet as we know it would not function.*** However, the importance of soil and the multitude of environmental services that depend on soil properties are not well understood by society at large. Part of the problem is that, with an increasingly urban society, many people have lost contact with the processes that lead to food production. Most people expect to find food on the shelves of supermarkets and have limited or even no appreciation of the roles played by soil. Concepts such as nutrient cycling and organic matter management, that are critical to soil fertility and food production, are a mystery to most of us.

There is very little dialogue between the soil science community and the general public. The majority of soil-related information is geared toward university-level or scientific journals – normally beyond the reach and understanding of the general public. As a consequence, **soil tends not to feature in the minds of the public or politicians.**

Not only do the public lack awareness, there is a deliberate overlooking of the complexity of soil biodiversity by the vested interests who peddle their fertilisers, weedicides, pesticides, large machinery and expensive programs which are self-perpetuating as they mostly do not address the cause. These products usually address one problem in isolation in order to find a solution. This is not how nature works! Soil experts are becoming increasingly aware of a greater need to inform and educate the general public, policy makers, land managers and other scientists of the importance and global significance of soil and its functioning. This is particularly true for soil biology and biodiversity. Life within the soil is hidden and, therefore, often suffers from being 'out of sight, out of mind'.

So in 2015, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) brought together over 84 contributors to collaborate in creating the publication Global Soil Atlas to raise awareness about the importance of soil biodiversity for the functioning of our ecosystems, our ecosystem services and ultimately human well-being. This atlas aims to raise awareness of the important roles that the soil biota play in driving life on Earth, and demonstrate that soil is a vital habitat that needs to be managed in a sustainable way or, in some cases, protected from misuse and degradational processes. In order to better explain the complex interactions that occur among organisms in the soil, this atlas is divided into six main sections:

- The Soil Habitat
- Diversity of Soil Organisms
- Geographical and Temporal Distribution
- Ecosystem Functions and services
- Threats
- Interventions

Soil Lovers says: A Biodiverse Range Of Plants Above Ground Drives The Creation Of A Healthy Soil.