



World Soil Day 2019

Hi Friends its me, Manzi again.

Friends did you know that 5 December 2019 is World Soil Day? This day has been celebrated every year since 2014. It was started by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to raise awareness about soil management and to encourage communities, organisations and individuals around the world to take part in improving soil health. It is a way of drawing attention to the importance of healthy soil and supporting the sustainable management of soil resources. The theme for this year is "Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future".

Soil erosion is the removal of the fertile top soil from the area where it was formed to another location usually by wind and water. Too much erosion causes problems such as:

- Desertification (process where fertile land becomes a desert);
- Decrease in the amount of crops produced because of land that has been ruined;
- Sedimentation of waterways; and
- Ecological collapse because of the loss of soil layers that are rich in nutrients.

Causes of Soil Erosion

- ◆ Overstocking and overgrazing by animals.
- ◆ Inappropriate farming techniques, such as deep ploughing land too often.
- ◆ Lack of crop rotation.
- ◆ Planting crops down the contour instead of along it.

According to the FAO over 33% of the Earth's topsoil is already degraded and 90% could become degraded by 2050. It can take up to 1000 years to produce 2-3 cm of soil. Soil erosion is a huge global environmental problem. If there isn't healthy topsoil it means that crops cannot be planted to produce food, therefore food security is threatened. In our gardens we need to do everything we can to reduce soil erosion.



Credit: www.fao.org

In South Africa soil erosion is a huge problem. It is estimated that over 400 million tons of topsoil is washed into our rivers and out to sea every year.



How to prevent soil erosion

- ✓ The use of contour ploughing and windbreaks.
- ✓ Leave unploughed grass strips between ploughed lands (strip cropping).
- ✓ Make sure that there are always plants growing in the soil, and that the soil is rich in humus.
- ✓ Avoid overgrazing.
- ✓ Allow indigenous plants to grow along riverbanks.
- ✓ Conserve wetlands.
- ✓ Cultivate land, using a crop rotation system.
- ✓ Minimum or no digging.
- ✓ Encourage water infiltration and reduce water runoff.
- ✓ Plant many trees and use gabions where there is signs of erosion.



Credit: www.nda.agric.za/publications

What can you do to improve soil health?

- ◆ Plant indigenous trees.
- ◆ Start a Water Wise vegetable garden.
- ◆ Use mulch around your plants in the garden.
- ◆ Use compost in the garden.
- ◆ Design your garden so that water is allowed to seep into the ground and not run off the surface.
- ◆ Plant plants, like vetiver grass, that hold the soil.

Let us look after our soil, so that in return it can look after us. Without healthy soils it means that there won't be healthy food, clean air and healthy water to drink as well. Remember the six meanings of being Water Wise:

1. Respect Water, Respect Life
2. Don't Waste Water
3. Don't Pollute Water
4. Pay for Water Services
5. Take Environmental Action
6. Conserve Water, Conserve the Environment

May your festive season be Water Wise!

Until next year friends!



With Love
Manzi



References for Newsletter:

- www.fao.org
- www.randwater.co.za
- www.nda.agric.za

For more information on being Water Wise please contact 0860 10 10 60 or logo onto www.waterwise.co.za.



ACTIVITY: HOW TO PLANT A TREE

One of the ways to stop soil erosion is to plant a tree. The roots of the tree will hold the soil, preventing it from being washed away. A tree also has other uses, such as providing shade; acting as a windbreak; providing food and shelter for animals; etc. Follow these steps to plant a tree:

Step 1: Select an indigenous tree for the area where you stay.

Step 2. Select an area where you want to plant your tree. Check that the roots will not interfere with any buildings, paving, pipes, etc.

Step 3: Using a spade dig a hole half a spade deep and half a spade wide. (This may vary according to the size of your tree.) Your hole must be a square.

Step 4: When digging make sure that you separate the topsoil (dark in colour) from the subsoil (lower down).

Step 5: Remove the plastic cover around the roots of the tree.

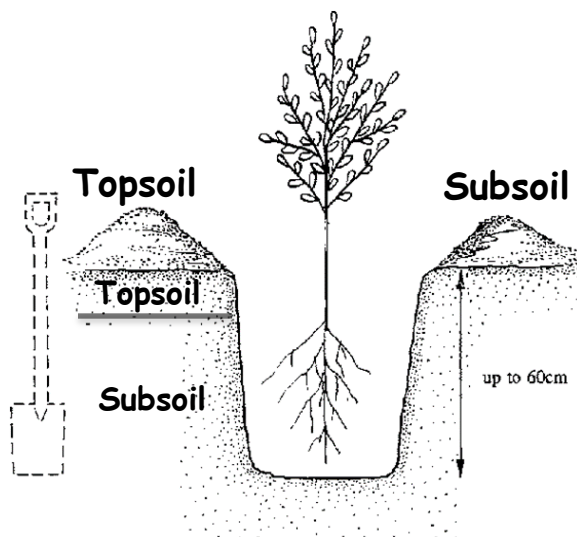
Step 6: Place the tree in the hole.

Step 7: Return the subsoil and then the topsoil.

Step 8: Make a furrow around the tree.

Step 9: Water the tree.

Step 10: Take care of your tree.



Share the photo of your tree on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) using the hashtags: #StopSoilErosion; #WorldSoilDay; and #WaterWise. Enjoy your tree.

"Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future"



For more information on being Water Wise please contact 0860 10 10 60 or logo onto www.waterwise.co.za.

