SOME DEVICES AND METHODS USED IN TEACHING SOILS

A. B. Beaumont

Within the past few years some devices and methods have been used in the teaching of courses in soils at the Massachusetts Agricultural College with sufficient success to warrant reporting. They affect the following topics of instruction: (1) Soil formation and classification, (2) tillage, and (3) the field problem.

SOIL FORMATION AND CLASSIFICATION

A “sand” table was made by mounting on a sturdy table a shallow box. In this have been demonstrated soil differences as influenced by method of formation, parent material, texture, color, etc. Drum-lins, eskers, terraces, alluvium, muck soils, and peat bogs can be shown. (See Fig. 1.) With it, differences in soil series and types due to topography, color, and other factors can be vividly illustrated. In short, with this device the ingenious teacher can illustrate nearly all the agencies and factors affecting soil formation and classification. The student’s imagination, however, must be brought into play. Such a device should be considered a supplement to rather than a substitute for field studies in soil formation and classification. True, it is artificial in its make-up, but that has advantages. Points which may have no counterpart in the natural environment may be brought out by means of it, and on account of the reduced scale employed, direct comparisons may be made which may be difficult to see in the field. The “sand” table method has been used in teaching military tactics, but so far as the writer knows has not been used extensively, if at all, in the teaching of soils.

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^Professor of Soils.