Illiteracy concerning the soils which support humankind gives rise to daily frustrations and costly errors, as lawyers, economists, and buyers and sellers of land make misjudgments out of ignorance, and thereby fail to match land use or land price with soil capability. In view of the increasing restrictions on digging in soils and leaving fresh excavations open for observation, the authentic scientific soil profile excavation exhibit in public botanical gardens and museums seems to be the educational device best suited to the need for informing the public about soils. We can ill afford to be without this modern teaching aid.

SOIL CLASSIFICATION CARDS: AN AID IN IDENTIFYING SOILS IN THE FIELD

Randall B. Brown1, Donald W. Owens2, and Willie L. Pittman3

Introduction

The Erie County, N. Y. Soil Survey staff has developed a system of “soil classification cards” to complement the local soil mapping key and to aid in selecting and classifying soil pedons. The system provides an abbreviated, convenient version of Soil Taxonomy (2), and is developed and applied entirely at the local level, which eliminates extraneous, cumbersome, and potentially confusing taxonomic detail.

The Need for an Abbreviated Taxonomic Guide

Field soil scientists strive to become familiar with Soil Taxonomy and fluent in its language. Frequently they must apply taxonomic criteria which are impractical if not impossible to commit to memory, and usually they have no practical way of carrying the taxonomy with them while mapping. In addition, field men engaged in selection and description of pedons for field review, correlation, and sampling, or analysis of map unit composition, often find it awkward and time consuming to wade through the taxonomy at pitside. Therefore the need exists for a clear, concise abbreviation of the taxonomy which can be carried in a map board and applied with ease and speed in the field.

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