They are related to their soil, their climate, their altitude. What else can account for the fact that one kind of plant will flourish and another will die in exactly the same spot? As for human beings: Are we not related to -- perhaps it is better to say influenced by -- our natural surroundings? Doesn't that account for the very obvious fact that inhabitants of mountainous regions differ so very decidedly from dwellers on plains?" (Quoted by E. F. Dolan, Jr. in GREEN UNIVERSE, The Story of Alexander von Humboldt, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1959)

PORTRAIT OF A SOIL SCIENTIST

A soil scientist is a person who has devoted his life, also the lives of his family and friends, to the quest of adjectives with which to describe what common people know simply as - dirt.

You can pick him out of any crowd. He will have a shallow to medium depth soil auger in his right hand and a light to heavy map board in his left. A set of questionable to very questionable key tables will protrude from his shallow to very shallow shirt pocket, and a 7H to 3B pencil will be perched over his sandy to silty ear. He will be sitting on an upended new to slightly used tiling spade, with a far-away look in his moderately saline to very salty eyes.

His personal characteristics can also be described in precise language. His build is from short to tall or from thin to ample. His complexion is a definite shade of whitish grey, greyish white, reddish brown, brownish red, brown, dark brown, or black.

The A horizon of the profile is very slightly to moderately permeable. His forehead has a wide range in slope, varying from nearly level (0 to 2%) to moderately steep (9 to 14%).

His parent material is not easily classified, is subject to debate and so has never been coded.

By Cal Wixom
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MAN AND HIS EARTH

This is the title of a book published by the Iowa State University Press and written by George D. Scarseth, soil scientist who grew up as a farm boy near Galesville, Wisconsin, and was Director of Research