BRITISH SOCIETY OF SOIL SCIENCE

SOIL EXPLORERS

Super Sponges?

OBJECTIVE

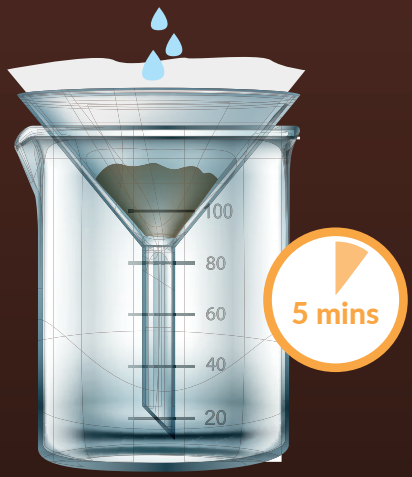
Did you know that soil holds water? It helps plants grow even when there is no rain for a long time. In fact, a space the size of a standard football pitch can hold up to an Olympic swimming pool's worth of water; that's a lot! Some soils are better at holding water than others. Try this experiment to test water retention in different soil samples... can you find the super sponge?

EQUIPMENT

- **Samples of dry soil/substrates** *including sand, gravel, peat-free compost*
- **5 funnels**
- **5 coffee filters**
- **5 beakers or jars**
- **1 or more 50ml mess cylinders**
- **Weighing scales**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Weigh 50g of each soil sample.
2. Place a coffee filter into each funnel, and then carefully place each soil sample into a different funnel. Pat the sample down gently.
3. Slowly pour 50ml of water over each funnel, then wait 5 minutes.
4. Check how much water has passed through each soil sample by measuring with the mess cylinders.



Which soil sample held onto the least water? Which held the most? Did you find a super sponge?

Let us know what you discovered, and find out more by scanning here

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY