

## Soil Forming and Decomposition

The birth of soil begins with a large quantity of bedrock. This is the parent material from which the soil will be formed by weathering and erosion. Next, some of the parent material is broken into pieces by weathering. A glacier can grind off big boulders and fine sediment, and wind or running water make small mineral particles. After that, some of the parent material is transformed chemically into different types of minerals. This can occur from water or air coming into contact with the weathered pieces. Finally, creatures like lichens begin to colonize the soil. Bacteria, fungi and protozoa come next, which make humus out of organic matter. After a little while, plants can grow in this humus, and animals can live off these plants. Both plants and animals decompose when they die and help to make the minerals in the soil more available to other plants (and consequently, other animals). And so the circle continues, and the soil, under normal conditions, grows richer and richer.

1. Bedrock
2. Breakup of rock
3. Soil broken up by roots and nourished by decomposing plants and creatures
4. This helps to fuel more plant and animal life!

