



# FOUNTAIN PARK HEALTHY SOIL INITIATIVE

Landscape committee proposal presented to the Board on March 16,  
2022



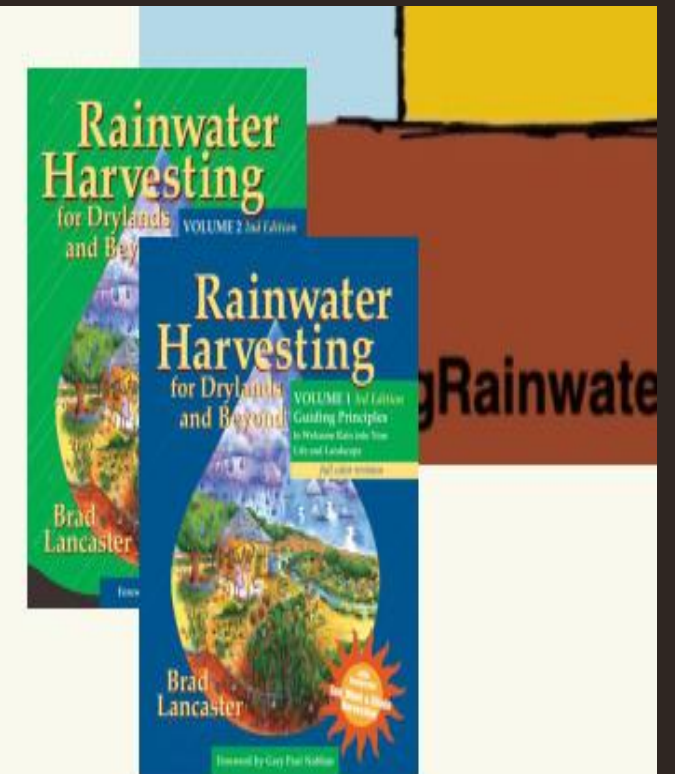
## Current state

Bare, compacted dirt from which virtually all organic matter has been blown off.

Is this the best thing for trees and plants in the park?

- Pima County Master Gardener Zoom Soil Science Class
- Watershed Management Group recommendations for Fountain Park, November 2019
- Watershed Management Group Healthy Soils Resource Guide
- Tucson Audubon Society Guide to Food Rich Landscapes for Birds and People
- Green Infrastructure Manual for Desert Communities
- <https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/trees-for-tucson/information-resources/planting-maintenance-education/>
- <https://www.spadefootnursery.com/revegetation>
- <https://www.spadefootnursery.com/planting-a-new-plant>
- <https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/trees-for-tucson/gsi-mini-grants/>
- <https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/>

## Local Resources



# LIVING SOIL

Fertile soil is more than just dirt. It contains particles of rock and dead plant and animal matter as well as water, oxygen, and living bacteria, fungi, worms, and insects. These living creatures break down the dead plant and animal matter into forms usable by living plants which in turn may become food for animals. When these plants and animals die, the constant life-death-life-death cycle begins again.

What is healthy or living soil?



# SOIL BASICS: Water + Carbon (Organic Materials) => Soil Life!

**Soil is alive!** It is made up of inorganic materials (sand, silt, and clay), organic materials, air, water, and critters (micro and macro organisms).

**Before:** Soil is compacted, with little dead or living organic material.

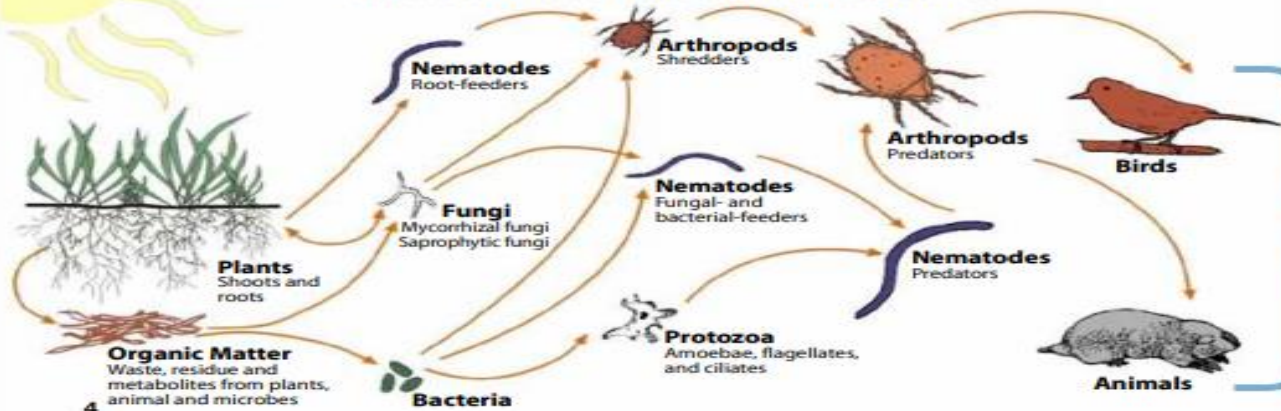


**After:** Soil is being de-compacted through increased decomposing organic material and soil life activity.



## Soil Food Web

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Healthy soil has a complex ecosystem full of life. Did you know all these types of critters are essential for soil health?

Source:

[Watershed Management Group](#)  
[Healthy Soils Resource Guide](#)

## YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTHY DESERT SOILS FOR PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES

*Follow these four steps and you can  
build healthy soil!*

**(1) Plant the Water:**  
Increase soil  
moisture &  
spark life

**(2) Protect Soil:**  
Minimize erosion  
& eliminate  
chemicals

**(4) Plant Your  
Ecosystem:**  
Promote roots,  
ground covers  
& nitrogen fixers

**(3) Mix in  
Organics:**  
Put organics  
in your yard,  
not the landfill

Building healthy soil benefits you and your community. Healthy soil is the foundation of a beautiful and productive yard. You'll have healthier trees, a vibrant vegetable garden, and more food and habitat for your favorite wildlife. In addition, you can reduce the trash that ends up in the landfill, reduce pollution to our water bodies, and mitigate flooding problems.

The specifics of this guide are geared for desert soils in arid and semi-arid environments like those found throughout the western U.S. However, the principles are relevant to soil building in all environments, wet or dry.

How do we  
build healthy  
soil?

Source:

[Watershed Management Group  
Healthy Soils Resource Guide](#)



## PROTECT SOIL!

- Minimize practices which disturb or compact the soil. Continued disturbances inhibit soil-forming processes.
- Protect the soil surface from wind and water erosion by applying surface mulch.
- Eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. The use of these chemicals creates harmful dependencies that destroy instead of build the soil food web cycling of nutrients. Additionally the majority of these products are harmful to people, wildlife, and pets.

### GOOD PRACTICES



**Prune & Mulch**



**Stabilize slopes**



**Apply organic ground covers**

### BAD PRACTICES



**Leaf Blowing**



**Spraying**



**Raking**



The committee met on 1/18/22.

On 1/22/22 we visited Mission Garden to see these practices in use.

The committee met again on 2/15/22 to approve going forward with a proposal to the board.

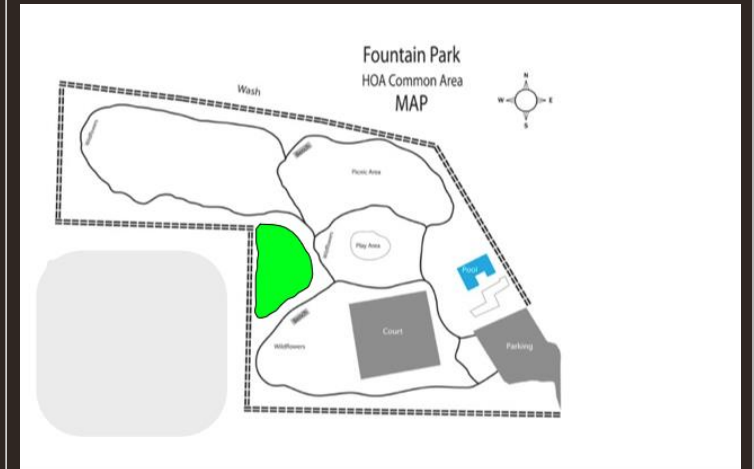
Source:

[Watershed Management Group Healthy Soils Resource Guide](#)

# Going Forward

- The HOA paid for a park assessment in 2019 done by Watershed Management Group, a local non profit, whose mission is to foster sustainable environments.
- *“Define and plan park zones that includes A) high use clean zone for the playground area, B) transition zone that expands out from the high use zone and along heavy use corridors, and C) a habitat zone along the perimeter and the northwest extension of the park.*
- ***Maintenance practice regime** - based on the defined zones shift maintenance practices in the habitat zone to allow for understory growth, filling out of mesquites, accumulation of leaf litter and mulch on the soil surface while maintaining a clear 1-2' buffer along trails. In the transition zone allow accumulation of organic mulch and understory pollinators but keep the mid-story clear for visible sight lines, and in the high use clean zone continue as is to keep a safe, clear environment.”*

The committee agreed to propose to the board designating an area of the park on the west side, across from the play structure, where leaf drop will be left in place and woody mulch will be added. This follows the recommendation from the Watershed Management Group consultation for the transition zone:





## ➤ **Board Approval**

➤ **Funding: signs = \$88/ woody mulch= TBD, either from Tanks Green Stuff which is \$35/yard plus delivery fee of \$80, or possibly can be obtained free of charge from tree trimming services.**

➤ **Develop instructions for the landscaping crew.**

➤ **Educate and inform our community via the Splash, a sign in the Healthy Soil Initiative area of the park, and add information to the Fountain Park website.**

➤ **Follow up and Evaluate**

Next Steps



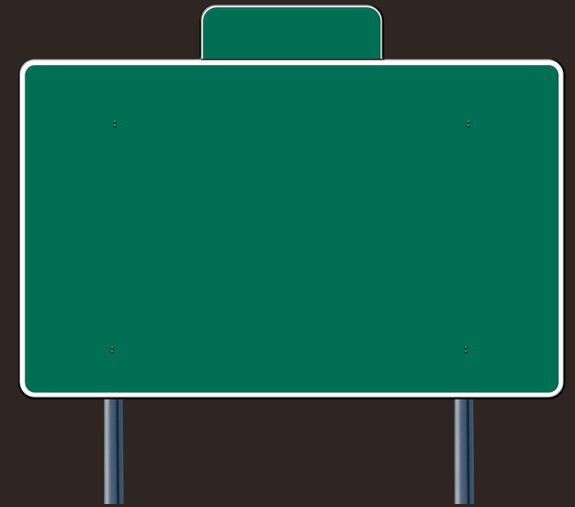
# Building Healthy Soil

Leaving fallen leaves on the ground and adding a layer of woody mulch benefits the trees and shrubs in this area by:

- Conserving moisture
- Suppressing weeds
- Fostering beneficial soil microorganisms
- Keeping roots cool in summer and warm in winter
- Reducing soil compaction, which increases oxygen and water penetration to plant roots

Questions? Go to [fountainparkphoa.org](http://fountainparkphoa.org)

Park Sign



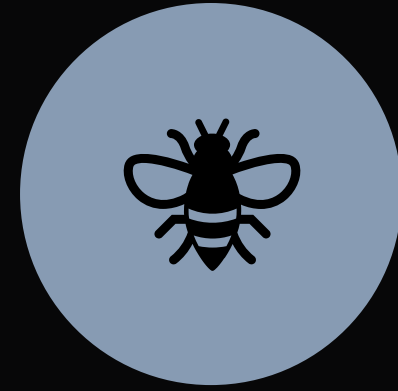
# Thank you for your attention!



LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE  
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JOELLE COFFMAN,  
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ALICIA NAVIA,  
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