How to Use a Soil Survey

From the USDA:

A soil survey is a detailed report on the soils of an area.

The soil survey has maps with soil boundaries and photos, descriptions, and tables of soil properties and features.

Soil surveys are used by farmers, real estate agents, land use planners, engineers and others who desire information about the soil resource.

The major parts of a soil survey publication

- Table of Contents
- Detailed soil map units
- Use and management and interpretive tables
- Classification of soils
- References
- Glossary
- Index to map sheets
- Soil maps

Using the soil survey

Obtain a printed soil survey from the NRCS, USDA office, or local conservation office.

Open the soil survey to **Index To Map Sheets**

Locate your area of interest or property on the **Index**.

The numbers in rectangles correspond to the map sheet number located in the second half of the publication.

Look at the aerial map closely and locate landmarks such as roads or streams to find your area of interest.

The lines on the image separate different soil types. Your area of interest may include one or more types.

The small letters or numbers that are within the same polygon as your area of interest, such as ScC, or KnC, or LaC designate a map unit. Note this map unit symbol. It is the key to finding information.

Turn to the **Index to Map Units** which shows the page where these map units are described. Also go to the various tables or reports which are organized by map unit symbol.

If you find a term or soil description in the detailed information sheet on your soil and you would like to learn what that term means, go the **Glossary** section of the report. The glossary is located in the center of the publication.

Using the soil survey - Tables

The **Tables** section of the soil survey report provides detailed information on soil properties and their suitability and limitations as well as management and production potential of the various soils.

The **Tables** section has detailed information on engineering index properties, physical and chemical properties, and soil and water features.

The **Tables** section also has detailed information on soil use, such as crops and pasture, recreation, and engineering.

To use the tables, simply remember your map unit symbol and find it in the appropriate table.

Soil surveys

Archived soil surveys for Texas are available at: https://archive.org/details/usda-texas.