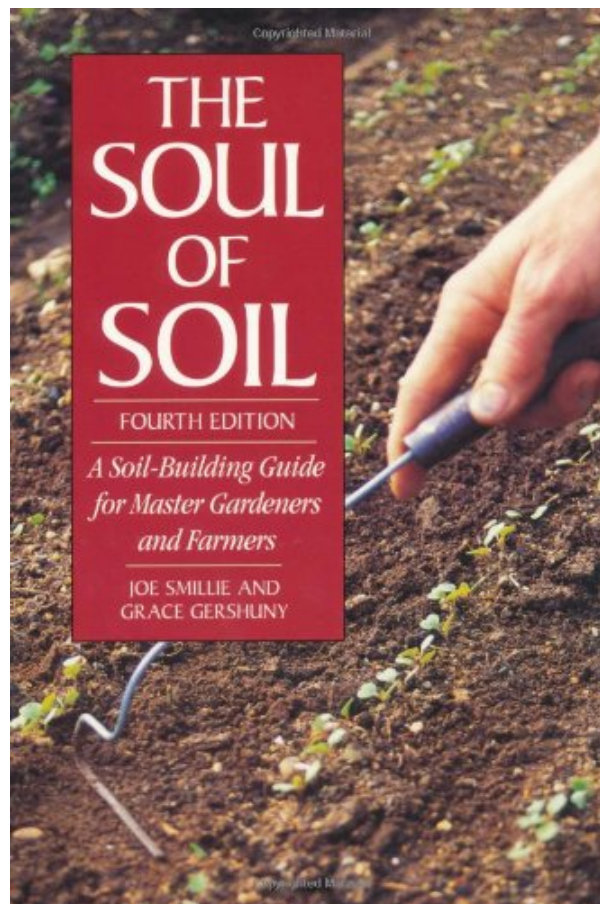
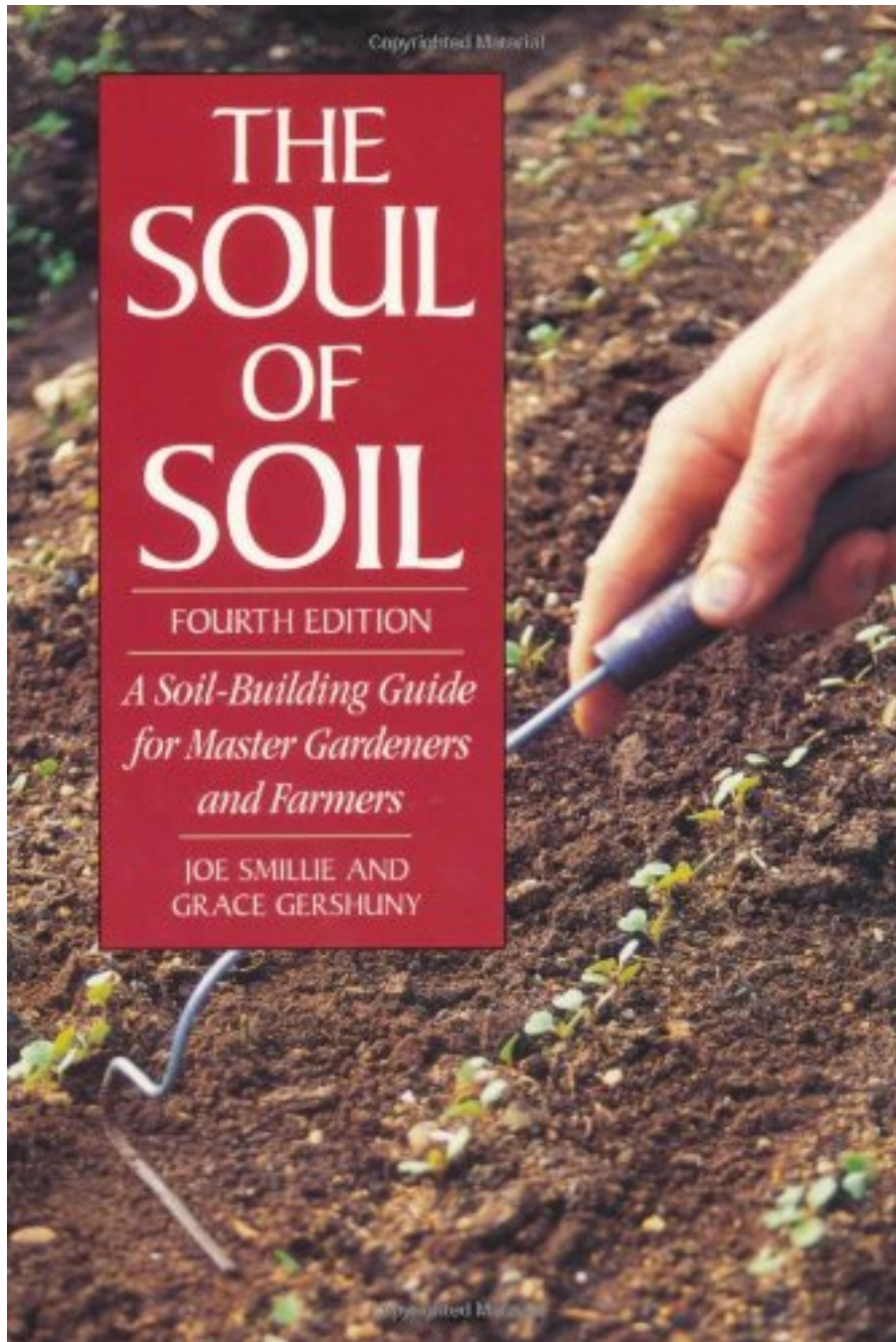


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Joe Smillie is the senior vice-president of Quality Assurance International, a leading organic certification agency. He is co-author of the books *The Orchard Almanac* and *Rodale's Chemical-Free Yard & Garden*, and is a founding member of the Organic Trade Association, and the International Inspectors Group. He lives in Richmond, Vermont.

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Soil is the basis not only for all gardening, but for all terrestrial life. No aspect of agriculture is more fundamental and important, yet we have been losing vast quantities of our finite soil resources to erosion, pollution, and development.

Now back in print, this eminently sensible and wonderfully well-focused book provides essential information about one of the most significant challenges for those attempting to grow delicious organic vegetables: the creation and maintenance of healthy soil.

Chapter 2, "Understanding the Soil System," is alone worth the price of admission. Gershuny and Smillie give lay readers and experts a clear explanation of subjects--soil life and nutrient cycles--that have confounded most authors. Nowhere will the reader find simpler and more coherent descriptions of key concepts including cation exchange capacity and chelation.

There are other books about soil available, including Grace Gershuny's comprehensive *Start with the Soil*, and there are books that feature chapters on soil building. What distinguishes *The Soul of Soil* is the authors' concise presentation; they give readers important information, including technical essentials, without getting bogged down in scientific or quasiscientific mumbo-jumbo. In addition, useful tables list specific compost materials, green manures, and other resources that allow growers to translate into action the more general information provided by the book.

The soil-building techniques featured include:

- Organic matter management
- Building and maintaining humus
- On-site composting
- Green manures and rotations
- Cultivation and weed control
- Nutrient balances and soil testing
- Using mineral fertilizers
- Planning for organic certification

Updates to the 1999 edition include analysis of Proposed Rules for the National Organic Standards, and expanded recommendations for private testing services and soil-testing equipment for home gardeners and organic farmers.

All of us involved in the cultivation of plants--from the backyard gardener to the largest farmer--need to help regenerate a "living soil," for only in the diversity of the soil and its creatures can we ensure the long-term health of ourselves and our environment. *The Soul of Soil* offers everyone a basic understanding of what soil is and what we can do to improve our own patch of it. Seen in this light, this practical handbook will be an

inspiration as well.

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- Used Book in Good Condition

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27 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

##### Contains Important Information

By A. Engert

I had purchased "Start with the Soil" by the same author and loved it. I thought this book would be a more advanced version but this is not the case. It was actually written before and reworked in a different format to become "Start with the Soil". This is the reason I gave it a lower rating. Although there are some differences, I would say if you are interested in a home size garden or landscape, this book is really not the better choice even though the other is no longer in print. That said, the information contained is invaluable and something anyone who loves working the soil should really understand--which ever version you end up purchasing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A multifaceted treatise on the art and science of soil building and maintenance.

By Adam J. McKee

The author does an amazing job balancing the technical with the practical. He does discuss some very technical aspects of soil science but does it in such a way that you never once think your sitting in a chemistry class. For the average gardener, this will probably be as technical as you'll ever want to get. If you are a budding soil scientist, this book will provide a gentle introduction to the topic that will prepare you for more advanced study. A truly multifaceted treatise on the art and science of soil buildin?g and maintenance.

39 of 42 people found the following review helpful.

For master gardeners and farmers, but also good for basics

By Abdulrahman Aljabri

This is truly a good book. It is short, simply written, and very informative. However, it is a little technical for the average Gardner. I personally picked-up this book to gain general knowledge about soil, and I found everything I asked for and more. Nevertheless, there were things that I felt were not explained enough, but that's not the fault of the author because I am neither a master gardner nor a farmer. In the begging of the book it almost seemed like the author was one of the environmentalist extremists, however as I continued reading I found the author to be a responsible writer with no extremism. As a matter of fact, on several occasions the author offered advise to non-organic farmers. Overall, a great book and coming from my non-farmer background I would give it 4 stars.

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