

Port Silt Loam

Oklahoma's State Soil



Oklahoma Conservation Commission

Port Silt Loam — Oklahoma's State Soil

Even before statehood Oklahoma's most valuable resource was its resourceful and imaginative people. Through the years they have chosen varied official state symbols to reflect their numerous interests, endeavors and habitat.

Many of the state symbols come with stories as colorful and unusual as the symbols themselves. One of the more recently adopted state symbols was the selection of Port Silt Loam (*Cumulic Haplustolls*) to represent the state soil for Oklahoma. The state soil was added to the list of official state symbols by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1987.



Why Have a State Soil?

Designating a state soil provides educational opportunities. Having a state soil helps bring attention to the importance of our soils and to the fact that we need to conserve the land for the well being of future generations. It gives educators and conservationists a specific soil on which to focus attention and to use as an example. Several other states across the nation have selected and designated a state soil to help them in their public awareness programs.

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Why Is Soil Important ?

The citizens of Oklahoma should have a keen awareness that soil is one of our most valuable natural resources. We could not survive and enjoy life as we know it, without soil. We get our food and much of our clothing and shelter from plants growing in the soil. Yet our actions since statehood show that we do not take very good care of this resource that is so important to the livelihood and well-being of our people — we let over 100 million tons of topsoil wash and blow away each year.

Oklahoma Has 2,500 Types of Soil

Oklahoma has a variable climate and many different kinds of geologic materials across the state. Both of these factors and others greatly influence the formation of different kinds of soil. There are over 2,500 different kinds of soil in Oklahoma. Some soils are naturally fertile, yet others are very limited in productivity. No one individual soil occurs throughout every region of the state.



Local conservation district offices and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offer valuable resources for soils information. Oklahoma has 88 conservation districts.

Facts About Port Silt Loam

- Port Silt Loam occurs in more counties than any other soil (about one million acres in 33 counties).
- Port Silt Loam is deep, well-drained, and highly productive, suited for a wide range of crops including alfalfa, small grains, sorghums, cotton and other sown crops, as well as range, pasture and woodland.
- Port soil is usually reddish in color, from dark brown to dark reddish brown. The color is derived from upland soil materials weathered from reddish sandstones, siltstones, and shales of the Permian Geologic Era.
- When Port soils are undisturbed, they produce native vegetation including tall grasses with an overstory of pecan, walnut, bur oak, and cottonwood trees. This native condition offers very desirable wildlife habitat for most of Oklahoma's wildlife species.

How Port Silt Loam Was Named

Soils are often named after an early pioneer, town, county, community or stream in the vicinity where they are first found. The name "Port" comes from the small community of Port located in Washita County, Oklahoma. The name "silt loam" is the texture of the topsoil. This texture consists mostly of silt size particles (.05 to .002 mm), and when the moist soil is rubbed between the thumb and forefinger, it is loamy to the feel, thus the term silt loam.



Port Silt Loam is suited for a wide range of crop production. In a no-till rotation plan, milo is planted in wheat stubble.

The Official State Soil

In 1987, recognizing the importance of our soil resource, the Governor and Oklahoma Legislature selected Port Silt Loam to represent this important state symbol for Oklahoma.

This pamphlet was produced in cooperation with the Professional Soil Scientists Association of Oklahoma.

Other State Symbols

In 1893 Oklahoma Territory adopted Mistletoe as the Regional Flower fourteen years before statehood. According to legend Mistletoe, a tree parasite, was chosen because it was the only green thing visible to pioneers during their first fall and winter of 1889. They took it into their hearts and homes to give them hope for spring.

In 1910 the Oklahoma State Legislature selected Mistletoe as the official State Flower. Today Mistletoe is one of the state's most well known symbols.

Other Oklahoma state symbols include the Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher, the Redbud Tree, the White Bass, Indian Grass, American Bison, Eastern Collared Lizard, Barite Rose Rock, and Indian Blanket as the official State Wildflower. These diverse symbols represent show the diverse ecology of Oklahoma and varied interests of its people.

Oklahoma Conservation Commission
2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Suite 160
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4210
<http://www.okcc.state.ok.us>