
**Soil quality — Determination of particle
size distribution in mineral soil
material — Method by sieving and
sedimentation**

*Qualité du sol — Détermination de la répartition granulométrique de la
matière minérale des sols — Méthode par tamisage et sédimentation*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

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ISO 11277 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 190, *Soil quality*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 11277:1998), of which it constitutes a minor revision, and incorporates ISO 11277:1998/Cor.1:2002.

Introduction

The physical and chemical behaviour of soils is controlled in part by the amounts of mineral particles of different sizes in the soil. The subject of this International Standard is the quantitative measurement of such amounts (expressed as a proportion or percentage of the total mass of the mineral soil), within stated size classes.

The determination of particle size distribution is affected by organic matter, soluble salts, cementing agents (especially iron compounds), relatively insoluble substances such as carbonates and sulfates, or combinations of these. Some soils change their behaviour to such a degree, upon drying, that the particle size distribution of the dried material bears little or no relation to that of the undried material encountered under natural conditions. This is particularly true of soils rich in organic matter, those developed from recent volcanic deposits, some highly weathered tropical soils, and soils often described as “cohesive” (Reference [3] in the Bibliography). Other soils, such as the so-called “sub-plastic” soils of Australia, show little or no tendency to disperse under normal laboratory treatments, despite field evidence of a large clay content.

The procedures given in this International Standard recognize these kinds of differences between soils from different environments, and the methodology presented is designed to deal with them in a structured manner. Such differences in soil behaviour can be very important, but awareness of them depends usually on local knowledge. Given that the laboratory is commonly distant from the site of the field operation, the information supplied by field teams becomes crucial to the choice of an appropriate laboratory procedure. This choice can be made only if the laboratory is made fully aware of this background information.

