Science Societies

Soil riddles: October 2026

By Aaron Lee M. Daigh

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Think you know soils? Test your knowledge in our “Soil Riddles” series.

> If you are the first to guess the soil series name and its geographical location correctly, we'll publish your name along with the answer in an upcoming issue.

Amazing soils are all around us. We see some quite often, while others only on special occasions or during a once in a lifetime trip. My wife, daughter, and I love to travel and have had the opportunity to visit some bizarrely interesting soils. My wife and I are both soil scientists and know very well how excited soil scientists get when trying to identify a soil from a photo or even just a partial core. In that spirit, here is a riddle for you!

Each month, I will share a new riddle in *CSA News*. If you are the first to guess the correct **soil series name** and its **geographical location**, I will publish your name along with the answer in an upcoming issue. Email your answers to me at adaigh2@UNL.edu (send message) with the subject line "*Soil Riddles October 2026.*"

Good luck and have fun!

Soil Riddle 1

The greatest Glacial Lake left clayey deposits behind,

Till plains formed where the ice had declined.

My A horizon is dark reddish brown clay loam,

Then glossic E/B tongues make their home.

Reddish gray silt invades reddish brown Bt,

A glossic horizon where illuviation's key.

Below, my Bt turns dark red, angular blocks,

Sixty to ninety percent clay that water locks.

Btk horizons show where carbonates accrue,

Pink soft masses where calcium carbonate grew.

Vertic features mark my shrink-swell terrain,

Linear extensibility from smectitic domain.

Very-fine textured, mixed, and active class,

A frigid Vertic Glossudalf where forests mass.

Red maple and balsam fir and quaking aspen tall,

Paper birch and white spruce where lake winds call.

My name comes from Chippewa, meaning "red earth,"

The color that gives my horizons their worth.

Near rock outcrops where the ancient shield shows through,

With cousins named for a river and a Swedish-sounding view.

Along the great lake's shore where agates lies,

Where clayey till plains meet grandeur skies.

What is my series name, and where do I lie?

Last month's winners

The answers to last month's (September 2026) riddles were "the Montoya and Quay soil series, near the Canadian River in Oldham County, Texas." We had two winners this time! Congratulations to **Monika Peddapuli** and **Rodney Simpson**.

Monika is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences at University of Florida, Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred. Her research focuses on evaluating nutrient management and irrigation strategies in Huanglongbing-affected citrus. Specifically, she is evaluating different nitrogen and phosphorus rate combinations to determine how they affect tree growth, fruit yield, and fruit quality. Rodney is a repeat winner. You can learn more about him here.

Monika Peddapuli and Rodney Simpson

Email answer(s)

More soil riddles

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