

Suburban Soil Fix Sheet

Jar % → what to add this weekend · Aim for loam ~40% sand / 40% silt / 20% clay

How to read your mason jar (quick)

Fill a clear quart jar ~ $\frac{1}{4}$ with soil from 4–6 inches down (not surface mulch). Add water nearly to the top, optional drop of dish soap, shake 2–3 minutes hard. Leave undisturbed. **Sand** settles first (minutes–hours), then **silt**, then **clay** overnight. Mark each band; each layer's height ÷ total soil height = its percentage.

Full how-to: [Telegraph mason-jar walkthrough](#) · Interactive % tool: [Soil jar calculator](#)

Fix map: your jar % → what to add this weekend

If your jar looks like...	What that means	Add this weekend (backyard scale)
Sand ≥ 55% (thin silt/clay)	Water & nutrients race through. Beds dry out between waterings.	• 1–2" finished compost or leaf mold on beds • Optional thin clay-rich topsoil mix in planting holes • Mulch after watering to slow evaporation • Skip "miracle" sand bags — they make sand sandier
Clay ≥ 35% (sticky, slow drain)	Water sits; roots struggle for air. Hard when dry, glue when wet.	• Coarse compost / aged manure (not sand alone) • Gypsum only where soils/tests support it • Do not till when wet — creates bricks • Raised beds or double-dig once when crumbly-dry
Silt-heavy (smooth floury bands)	Compacts easily; crusts after rain; middle-of-road fertility.	• Compost + coarse organic matter for structure • Avoid walking on wet beds • Keep continuous living mulch / cover where possible
~40 / 40 / 20 (near loam)	Workable, drains with some hold. Protect it — don't over-fix.	• $\frac{1}{2}$–1" compost yearly; light fork only • Mulch; don't over-till • Write % + bed + date; retest next season

This weekend sequence (steal from the two-weekend trial)

Saturday: run the jar (or finish measuring layers if you already shook one). Write sand / silt / clay % in a notebook with the bed name.

Sunday: amend *one* maintainable bed only (roughly 32–96 sq ft you can water in under an hour). Match the row above. Do not redesign the whole yard in 48 hours.

Soft next step (optional)

A jar test is diagnosis. A sequenced backyard system (soil repair + beds + water + protein + season extension) is the map after diagnosis. If you want one calm path instead of ten conflicting YouTube tips:

→ [The Self-Sufficient Backyard \(digital guide, ~\\$37, 60-day guarantee\)](#)

https://selfsufficientbackyard.info/sirius?utm_source=owned-site&utm_campaign=leadmagnet&utm_medium=soil-fix-sheet&utm_id=sirius04

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