



## WHAT'S IN THE SOIL?

We all watched in awe as the perseverance rover touched on the surface of Mars. It was indeed an achievement for NASA and holistically indeed another leap for man. Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun, sometimes referred to as our sister planet. The Rover is the most sophisticated machine ever built with a price tag of over \$2.9 billion. The main purpose of this very pricey mission is to explore Mars for life or life forms. The landing site 'Jezero Crater' is a dried up river bed which is proposed to be the most likely place for life forms or their remains to be found in that soil.

However, we often underestimate and take for granted that the Earth is unique and its soil is special as well. The soil's ability to sustain life is indeed what sets the Earth apart from every other planet in the solar system. What then is in the soil? 'The soil is the uppermost layer of the earth's crust'. In short, it's that which we can feel under our feet, especially barefooted in our unpaved yards. Some even use the expression "treat it like dirt!" Well, that expression of the soil can really be something to behold as we examine the benefits of the soil.

The soil presents a never-ending cycle of giving, sustaining and receiving life. The soil is actively in the process of ensuring that our Earth remains habitable.

The soil as a 'giver'- maintaining the right temperature, water for seeds to germinate and microbes to live and multiply. Without the right temperature or water, the seed will not have the opportunity to reach their hidden potential to grow.

The soil as a 'sustainer'- the soil has the ability to hold within, the kind of nutrients that are basic for life. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are essential elements to sustain the health of plants

and thereby providing food for animals and humans. At the correct proportion of nutrients in the soil, the best crop can be grown.

The soil as a 'receiver'- the soil is the most efficient receiver of waste remains of living things. As it receives the residues from which it once produced with time, it reintegrates it into its never-ending cycle in preparation to give again.

Over the years, mankind has been so callous with regards to our soil, not appreciating its gifts and thus destroying it through deforestation, dumping of toxic waste and suffocating it with slabs of concrete. In doing so, we damage the organisms and their habitat with activities, indiscriminately cutting down trees and vegetation, stopping the necessary gaseous exchanges that sustain life in the soil with concreting the entire yard spaces; and finally killing ever possibility producing live where toxic waste is disposed of, especially on the land.

If we value our earth/soil, then \$2.9 billion is a great way of restoring our Earth by investing in grass lawns and green spaces, planting more fruit trees, reducing deforestation by supporting and promoting sustainable management, as proposed in the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). Then, maybe man's desire for an alternative to our living, breathing soil can turn their focus on the one we have, our own Earth.

***You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: "Our Earth, Our Environment", C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: [eit.epaguyana@gmail.com](mailto:eit.epaguyana@gmail.com). Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.***