

# Bama Soil

## *The Official State Soil of Alabama*

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**A** bird, a flower, a tree—and also a soil! Alabama has an official state soil to go along with her other official emblems and symbols. A state soil is represented by a soil series that has special significance to a particular state.

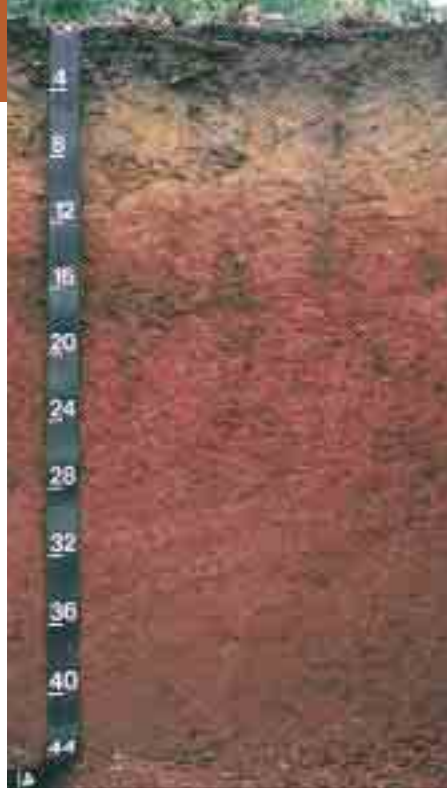
### Alabama's State Soil is Bama Soil

Soil of the Bama series is the official state soil of Alabama. Bama soils occur in 26 counties in Alabama on more than 360,000 acres in the state, mainly in the western and central part of the state, paralleling major river systems. Bama soils are well drained, have desirable physical properties, and are located on high positions of the landscape. These characteristics make them well suited to most agricultural and urban uses. They are well suited to cultivated crops, pasture, hay, and woodland. Cotton and corn are the principal cultivated crops grown on these soils.

A soil series is a naturally occurring entity on the landscape. Therefore, a given series does not necessarily occur within the confines of only one state. Bama soil occurs in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Virginia.

### How is a Soil Series Named?

Areas with similar soils are grouped and labeled as soil series because their similar origins and chemical and physical properties cause the soils to “behave” similarly for land use purposes. The names of soil series, as a rule, are abstract place names. The name is generally taken from a place near the one where the series was first recognized. It

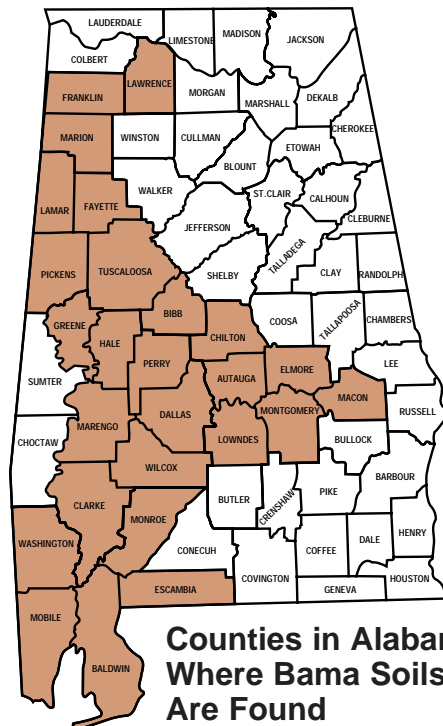


may be the name of a town, a county, or some local feature. Examples of soil series in Alabama that fall within this category include Dothan, Decatur, Greenville, and Hartselle soils. On the other hand, some series have coined names. The series name “Bama” is a coined name derived from our state name, Alabama and the Alabama River. The name was proposed for a group of soils first recognized in Mobile County in 1973. The word “Bama” is widely used and accepted as the short name of our great state and is, therefore, an appropriate name for a soil selected to represent the soils of the state.

### How Was the Selection Made?

In order to identify a specific soil to represent the state soil of Alabama, the Professional Soil Classifiers Association of Alabama (PSCAA) established a committee to look at the numerous options. The PSCAA is an organization of soil scientists representing the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Alabama Department of Public Health, and private industry. The committee developed a minimum-criteria list that a soil should meet before being considered as the Alabama state soil. The criteria used included:

- Series type location in Alabama
- Extensive acreage mapped, or mapped in a large number of counties
- A productive soil (row crop and timber)
- Prime farmland
- Distinctive appearance



**Counties in Alabama Where Bama Soils Are Found**

- Name recognition
- Well suited to multiple use

After careful consideration, soil of the Bama series was selected for Alabama's state soil.

### How Was Bama Soil Established as an Official Symbol?

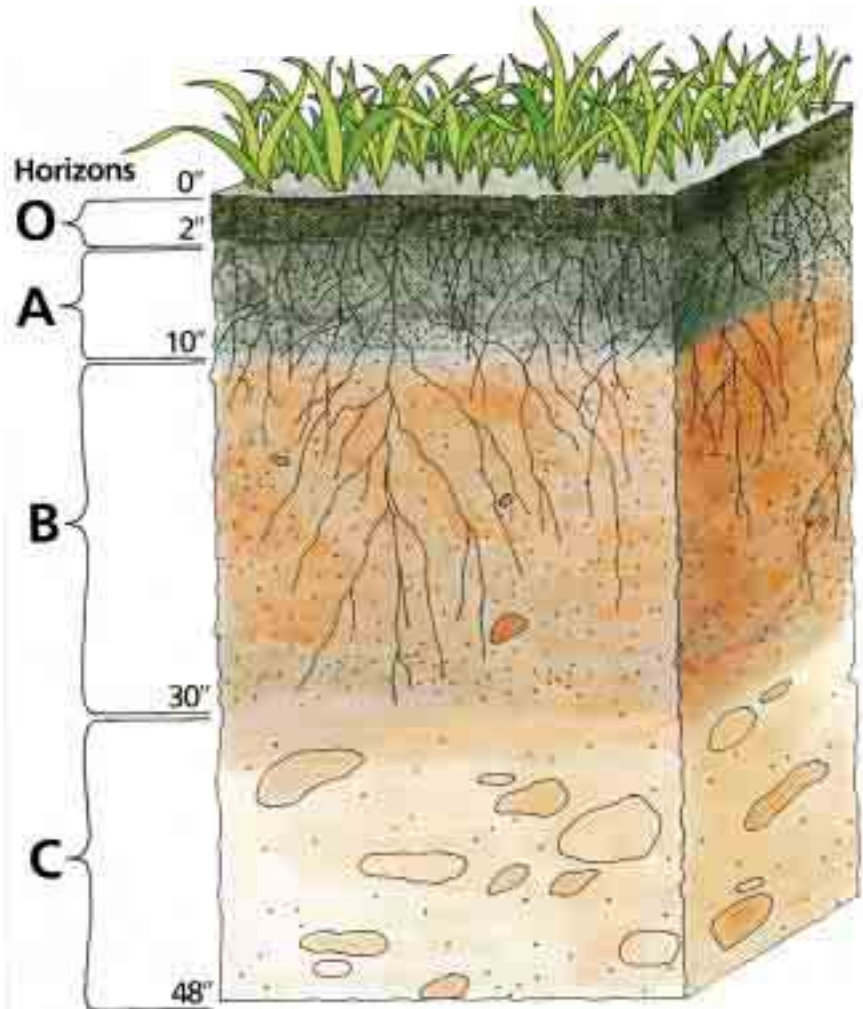
A legislative procedure is required to make an icon an official symbol. The Alabama Legislature adopted a resolution on April 22, 1997, which formally designated the Bama series as the official state soil. The resolution was sponsored by Senator Ted Little and Representative Pete Turnham of Auburn at the request of PSCAA.

### What is a Soil Profile?

A soil profile is the sequence of natural layers, or horizons, in a soil. Each soil series consists of soils having major horizons that are similar in color, texture, structure, reaction, consistency, mineral and chemical composition, and arrangement in the soil profile. The soil profile extends from the surface downward to bedrock or other relatively unaltered earthy materials. Most soils have three major layers—the surface layer, the subsoil, and the substratum. The surface layer (A or Ap horizon) is the uppermost layer and is the soil ordinarily moved in tillage, or its equivalent in uncultivated soil. It usually has a darker color, more organic matter, and less clay than the subsoil. The subsoil (B horizon) is usually lighter colored, denser, and lower in organic matter than the surface layer. It is the layer where leached materials, such as clay, iron, carbonates, or silica have accumulated. The substratum (C horizon) is the material in which the soil is forming, or the parent material. It may consist of organic materials, unconsolidated mineral sediments, or weathered bedrock. Each of the major layers may be subdivided into horizons differing in color, texture, or other soil property. Undisturbed soil will have an O horizon. It consists of leaf litter and other organic material lying on the surface of the soil. This layer is not present in cultivated fields.

A typical profile of the Bama soil consists of a layer of dark brown fine sandy

# A Soil Profile



loam topsoil about five inches thick; a subsurface layer of pale brown fine sandy loam about six inches thick; and a subsoil of red clay loam and sandy clay loam to a depth of 60 inches or more.

### What is the Purpose of Symbols?

One of the purposes of emblems and symbols is to serve as a reminder of the significance of the object that they represent. Having an official state soil will call attention to one of our most valuable natural resources—soil. The symbol will provide a visible acknowledgment of our appreciation of this resource. Adoption of the Bama soil as Alabama's state soil

will allow for its inclusion on Alabama highway maps, in textbooks, and in other official state documents, thereby increasing the awareness of the importance of soil in our environment.

Soil—it's more than dirt. As the natural medium for the growth of land plants and the support for buildings and roads, it is a coveted natural resource. Soil is one of Alabama's most important natural resources. It is vital to agriculture and forestry as well as to urban development, water quality, and wildlife habitat. And now, soils of the Bama series will serve as a reminder of the significance that soil plays in the everyday life of Alabama residents. 🌱