

State 3rd

Protect Kentucky's Soil:

Protect The Soil, or The Earth Will Spoil

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As a fellow citizen of our beautiful town of Shrewsboro, I am here to convince you, dear readers of *Digging Up Dirt Gazette*, that our soil is in terrible danger. My name is Martin, the short-tailed shrew, and I am fed up. I have quite a story to tell, and hopefully you will see the urgency in cleaning up the dirt in our community. See, I've been feeling the effects of dirty dirt for quite a while now. As the official town mascots, we shrews depend on the soil for our homes, food, and resources. We are misunderstood creatures, and are considered a nuisance to humans, even though we eat most of the pests you dislike, including slugs and field mice.

Since my whole livelihood is dedicated to digging up dirt, I know that you will appreciate my point of view. Even as a young shrew, my parents always told me, *never stop digging your way through life*. Now, because of your treatment to our soil, many animals could be injured. So, please consider what you can do in your own back yard to help stop these three main ways humans hurt our dirt: soil erosion, soil degradation, and soil pollution!

The first crime many of you readers are guilty of is contributing to soil erosion. Soil erosion is the washing or blowing away of the top layer of dirt, better known as topsoil. You humans are doing so much to ruin the land, but don't realize

what an impact it will make on the future! Please don't constantly remove the vegetation from land, as it protects my home! For example, when a citizen of Shrewsboro clears off topsoil, something as simple as rain can cause soil to erode. When proper vegetation, such as grass or crops, are not anchoring soil, the dirt will wash away and start to form a ditch. Eventually, the dirt will wash away so much, that a huge gully will be left there. A shocking fact you may not realize is that only 1/32 of the earth is available for vegetation. Fellow citizens of Shrewsboro, if you continue removing important plant life from the soil, our dirt will erode even more quickly!

Also, reshaping the lay of the land is another big way that soil is eroded. When contractors, homeowners, or farmers change the land continually, our soil loses much. I bet you didn't know this fact; on average, it takes up to 500 years to grow one inch of topsoil! If we keep losing soil, years from now the next generation might not be able to grow enough food for our nation. One way you can reverse the effects of erosion is to dig in the dirt! Get your hands dirty, and plant some luscious, delicious plants! I promise, dear readers, I will do my part to avoid your efforts as I go about my daily diggings.

Secondly, readers, are you a culprit of soil degradation? Soil degradation is a fancy term that really means a decline in soil quality caused by improper uses of the soil. My ancestors passed down stories from one famous example of soil

degradation, the Dust Bowl. During this time period, many people moved south. They wanted to become rich landowners, and they plowed as much soil as they could day after day. Long story short, all of the soil turned into nothing but a vast wasteland of sand and dirt with few nutrients. If farmers today acted in the same way, we would most likely experience the same awful fate. One way we can help take care of our soil is by composting and using organically safe fertilizers. Treat your dirt well, friends, and it will be kind to you!

Dear readers, you might not be aware but animals like me have been feeling the effects of dirty dirt for quite a while now. What exactly is dirty dirt? I'm glad you asked. Dirty dirt is more commonly known to you "above grounders" as soil pollution. Soil is polluted when man-made chemicals such as hydrocarbons, heavy metals, solvents, or trash find a way into the soil. In fact, just recently, I was trying to outrun a ferocious hawk, when suddenly I smacked head on into a big metallic object blocking my way. Thanks to my sharp hearing sense, I was able to escape. You see, my life was almost cut short, only because someone was too lazy to properly throw away a soda can. I hope to pass on to my children a wonderful clean living space...dirty dirt won't do!

Hopefully you have seen my frustration. Readers, I hope I have convinced you to protect our soil. If you remember one clump of brown goodness from my letter, set your minds to help stop this mess. Most people will toss this warning

aside, convinced it doesn't matter what we do with the soil, but if you keep on doing nothing to help protect the soil, we might not have soil to provide for the people of the earth. If you take away the good things from our soil, you threaten life itself. Here's one thing my dad always told me every night before bedtime in our little dirt home; *if you don't protect the soil, the earth will spoil*. Let us come together, men, women, children, and shrews alike to conserve and preserve a future of healthy, clean, dirt not only in Kentucky, but around the world!

Sincerely,

Martin Johnson