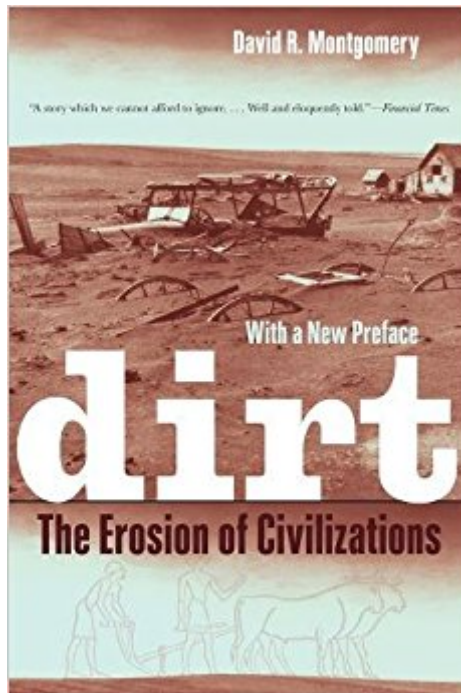




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# Dirt: The Erosion Of Civilizations



## Synopsis

Dirt, soil, call it what you want—it's everywhere we go. It is the root of our existence, supporting our feet, our farms, our cities. This fascinating yet disquieting book finds, however, that we are running out of dirt, and it's no laughing matter. An engaging natural and cultural history of soil that sweeps from ancient civilizations to modern times, *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* explores the compelling idea that we are—and have long been—using up Earth's soil. Once bare of protective vegetation and exposed to wind and rain, cultivated soils erode bit by bit, slowly enough to be ignored in a single lifetime but fast enough over centuries to limit the lifespan of civilizations. A rich mix of history, archaeology and geology, *Dirt* traces the role of soil use and abuse in the history of Mesopotamia, Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, China, European colonialism, Central America, and the American push westward. We see how soil has shaped us and we have shaped soil—as society after society has risen, prospered, and plowed through a natural endowment of fertile dirt. David R. Montgomery sees in the recent rise of organic and no-till farming the hope for a new agricultural revolution that might help us avoid the fate of previous civilizations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Anyone interested in environmental issues should read this book. . . . Entertains and stimulates thought.” (Times Higher Ed Sup (Thes) 2007-08-03) “Fascinating insights into what be our most precious natural resource and gives important pointers toward sustainable land management.” (Bioscience 2008-04-01) “How societies fare in the long run depends on how they treat their soils. Simple. Concise. You are your dirt.” (Carol Ekarius

Hobby Farms 2009-02-17)“Sobering. . . . A timely text that will no doubt stimulate the discussion of this issue, and its potential solutions, for years to come.” (Environment & History 2009-11-01)“Strengthen[s] appreciation for how important the soil is to our existence.” (Great Plains Research 2009-05-19)“This book is a thorough and enlightening treatment of the topic.” (The Perennial Bookworm 2011-03-07)“Sounds an ever timely and necessary clarion call.” (Vadose Zone Journal 2010-05-17)

"From this gritty and compelling state-of-our-earth report comes the inescapable truth that we are nothing if not dirty-minded. A brilliant and essential book."&#151;Roger Swain, science editor of Horticulture magazine"The relationship between soils and societies has been crucial for humankind for 10,000 years. David Montgomery brings a geomorphologist's eye and a world-historical vision to the subject, showing why it demands our attention."&#151;J.R. McNeill, author of *Something New Under the Sun* &#147;In our cyber-charged age, it's easy to forget that all six billion of us stand on the thin skin of the earth. Humanity is agriculture and agriculture is soil, just as it has been for 10,000 years. David Montgomery&#151;a competent digger of dirt and an engaging storyteller&#151;shows how a close look at the soil can reveal a surprising amount about who we are and where we are headed."&#151;Richard Manning, author of *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization*

Dr. Montgomery studied geology at Stanford and geomorphology at UC Berk. He has travelled widely and studied how cultures fail when they let their soil erode. His writing style is superior as is his commitment to his subject of interest. If you want to get down in the dirt about how to survive, this is the most important book to read. I rarely put my Oasis down before I finished it. My primary interest now is soils. My mission is to do things as close to perfectly on my one quarter of an acre. The first premise is no tilling, using cover crops, composting, and moving into planting as many perennial food trees, shrubs, etc. as I can fit in. Read it, read it. read it. Do not let whatever soil you have blow away or wash away. Cherish your dirt as the most important thing you have because it is.

Yes, the text is dry (pardon the pun but it really is), but the information is well presented and fascinating. I've been pecking away at it a few pages or chapters at a time, usually on long trips as I got the kindle edition, and I always learn something from history, science, or culture along the way. If this book doesn't get you to go organic, compost your own yard waste, or otherwise make you more aware of human history and the fragility and value of the soil beneath your feet, I'm not sure

what will.

You will NEVER look at your food, or dirt, the same again. And you will be very worried about the apathy and indifference of your neighbors...

I found this book to be so engaging and informative, I have been giving them out as gifts. While I work in agriculture and know more than your average bear about soil, David Montgomery's book *Dirt* gave me a whole new insight and forever changed the way I look at society's relationship with soil and agriculture. I just ordered his newest book, *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health*, and cannot wait to dive in deeper on the topic.

Every person should take the time to read this revealing book. It talks about the world today, not some questionable computer model for the future. The earth is running out of fertile soil and the vast frontiers of new virgin land are gone. The agricultural practices of modern technology vs. the population growth are not sustainable. It's not too late, there are ways to learn the lessons of the past and do it right. The solution will take time, education and sacrifice. The book presents the hard evidence---you walk on it every day. Who will embrace the facts and be part of the solution?

As more and more high quality farmland disappears because this society allows real estate speculative value to trump land's function of raising food for a frighteningly increasing global population, this book underline's our precarious dependence on the precious soil of this planet. David Montgomery's overview of many different civilizations and the impact of soil depletion on the decline of each culture should be read by every local, state, and federal politician. A must read !!!!

This should be required reading in agricultural classes and earth/space classes. Excellent read.

I thought this was a nice, comprehensive, review of the importance of soil (dirt) through the ages and how the rise and fall of civilizations depends on how soil is treated and maintained.

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