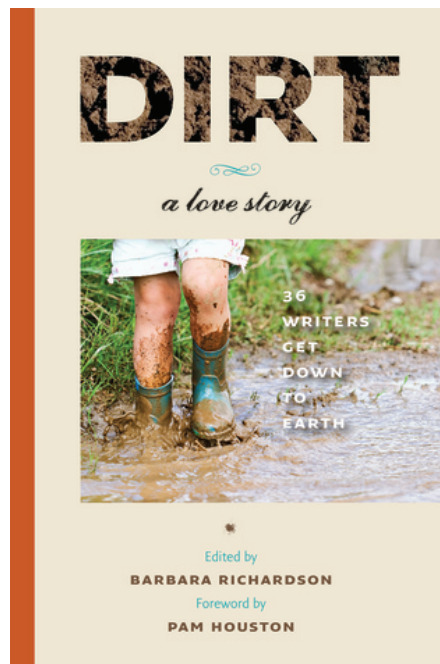




Dirt: A Love Story

Barbara K. Richardson (Editor) , Pam Houston

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Thirty-six artists, scientists, and renowned writers go wild about the virtues, pleasure, and importance of dirt!

Community farms. Mud spas. Mineral paints. Nematodes. The world is waking up to the beauty and mystery of dirt. This anthology celebrates the Earth's generous crust, bringing together essays by award-winning scientists, authors, artists, and dirt lovers to tell dirt's exuberant tales.

Geographically broad and topically diverse, these essays reveal life as lived by dirt fanatics—admiring the first worm of spring, taking a childhood swirl across a dusty Kansas farm, calculating how soil breathes, or baking mud pies. Essayists build a dirt house, center a marriage around dirt, sink down into marshy heaven, and learn to read dirt's own language. Scientists usher us deep underground with the worms and mycorrhizae to explore the vast and largely ignored natural processes occurring beneath our feet. Whether taking a trek to Venezuela to touch the oldest dirt in the world or reveling in the blessings of our own native soils, these muscular essays answer the important question: How do you get down with dirt?

A literary homage to dirt and its significance in our lives, this book will interest hikers, gardeners, teachers, urbanites, farmers, environmentalists, ecologists, and others intrigued by our planet's alluring skin.

Essayists include Vandana Shiva, Peter Heller, Janisse Ray, Bernd Heinrich, Linda Hogan, Wes Jackson, BK Loren, David Montgomery, Laura Pritchett, and Deborah Koons Garcia.

Dirt: A Love Story Details

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From Reader Review Dirt: A Love Story for online ebook

Katie says

This book is a collection of essays about dirt and the relationship that humans have with dirt. It contains essays by scientists, farmers, artists, and others, all extolling the virtues of dirt. Some essays lean towards the scientific, others the spiritual, and others the political.

I really enjoyed several of these essays, but as a whole, I found the collection to be a little repetitive. Connection to the land is important and enriching, exposure to dirt builds immunity, the life of soil is incredibly complex: I really appreciate all of these ideas, but reading numerous essays on these topics in a row became tedious.

Several of the essays piqued my interest in certain topics, especially the more scientific aspects of soil. A short essay can only go so far in explaining the complexities of soil biology, and I felt myself wanting more.

I did mark several of the essays that I really enjoyed, and I look forward to reading more by these authors.

On a more personal note, I read this book in the fall, the time of the year when I am, in some ways, the least fond of dirt. After a summer of farming and outdoor activity, I get tired of tracking dirt into my house, emptying dirt from my pockets, and just always feeling dirty. I had a hard time relating to the essays about the joy of getting dirty and being surrounded by dirt. Come spring, I'm sure I'll feel differently, but for now, I relate more to the essays about the scientific complexities of soil and a more broad relationship to the natural world.

(I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.)

Jennifer Fitzpatrick says

A great anthology for those who play in the dirt! Thirty six authors celebrate the soil, the history, the value, the importance, and the beauty of soil. As Anita Diffley says "soil is life".

David A-S says

Dirt: a Love Story is a book that is as fun as it is important.

This is an anthology mixing scientists, novelists, memoirists, urban gardeners, and homesteaders. What holds them together is their affection and gratitude for the soil.

They also have a deep concern for the rapid degradation of this basic foundation for human life.

Therefore, this work is filled with mischievous anecdotes of mud stained children and serious advocacy filled with calamitous projections.

Elizabeth Brookbank says

Some of these essays are wonderful - meditations on life, death, and gardening that you'd expect in a book about dirt. But some of them felt forced and like they'd been written for the sole purpose of appearing in this volume...which they probably had. My favorite piece in the whole book was actually the Forward by Pam Houston, so take that for what it's worth (precisely two cents!)

Susan Tweit says

As a botanist by training and a plant-lover by birth, it's not hard to sell me on an anthology of writers, artists, and scientists writing about dirt. Dirt--or what scientists call "soil" when we're being snooty--is the underground ecosystem that plant roots know as well as leaves and stems know sunlight. It's an under-appreciated world critical to all life on earth.

Dirt: A Love Story hooked me with the opening lines of novelist Pam Houston's Foreword:

"I live on 120 acres of dirt in a high mountain meadow in the Eastern San Juan Mountains in south central Colorado, near the headwaters of the Rio Grande. A woman named Dona Blair sold me these acres for 7 percent down and a signed copy of my first book, *Cowboys Are My Weakness*, because, she said, she liked the idea of me, and 7 percent down was all I had. I didn't have a job, either, or three pages of a new book to hold together. But my father was a hustler and he taught me to be a hustler and so for the next twenty years, I accepted every writing assignment and every teaching assignment that I was offered, and several more that I wasn't offered but had to go out and rustle up. I didn't sleep much in those two decades, but I love what I do for a living, and I am not sure our thirties and forties are supposed to be for sleeping anyhow."

Pam Houston knows how to tell a story, as do most of the contributors to *Dirt, A Love Story*, from Barbara Richardson's Preface, "The God of Dirt"--"You can't fool dirt. Nor can you escape it... Dirt anchors us all in reality"--to Atina Diffley's triumphant final piece, "Soil Versus Oil--Kale Versus Koch," which tells how she and her Minnesota community defeated Koch Industries' proposal to bulldoze a crude oil pipeline right through the rich soil of her family's organic farm.

Other standouts include CSA farmer and author Kayann Short's thoughtful essay, "Soil Versus Dirt"; memoirist and farmer's daughter Julene Bair's quietly sensuous "Dirt Princess"; novelist BK Loren's visionary "Dreaming in Dirt"; "Born Again" by author Donald G. Schueler, among the most wryly funny of Southern writers; filmmaker Deborah Koons Garcia's "Seeing Dirt"; novelist Laura Pritchett's self-deprecating and redemptive "Hostile Takeovers"; and "City Dirt," with its gospel-style call-and-response by urban farmer Karen Washington.

(Read the full review on Story Circle Book Reviews: <http://www.storycirclebookreviews.org...>)

Erin Lee says

I received this free book in a Goodreads Giveaway in exchange for a fair and honest review.

I feel a little out of my element. I enjoy a little recreational gardening, but I wouldn't consider myself a "dirt lover." I don't see dirt as quite the sexual or spiritual experience that many of these authors seem to, but this work has opened my eyes to the beauty and wonder of "simple" dirt. I am more well-versed in the "biophilia" and "pull of the pastoral" explained in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan.

One of my earliest memories is covering myself and my younger brother in mud as children and getting in loads of trouble, so I suppose I, too, have dirt-centric memories. When you start to think about it, everyone's personal history has a cornucopia of dirt-centered memories. Mine include the red rocky soil of a trip to Georgia as a new bride; the dusty earth of sun-scorched Ghana in high school; the feel of earthworms and moist soil in my hands as I "helped" Daddy in the garden as a child...

Okay...I don't LOVE dirt, but I don't fault those who do. It makes some good sense.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Dirt: A Love Story by Barbara Richardson is a very highly recommended anthology for dirt lovers everywhere. For those of us who love soil/dirt, let's speak the truth right now. As Jana Richman so eloquently points out: "Gorgeous, sexy people dig in dirt. People who age well. People who collect beauty in the creases of crow's feet. People with sturdy hands and good minds."

"The poetry of the earth is never dead." John Keats

In *Dirt* thirty-six artists, scientists, and renowned writers discuss and extol the virtues of soil, dirt, and the importance of it. The anthology contains essays by "writers, travelers, biologists, sculptors, green architects, terrestrial ecologists, geomorphologists, soil scientists, environmental economists, Sufi teachers, medicine women, farmers and the daughters and sons of farmers, and people who generally like to live close to the land." For all of them, well, us, the truth is that dirt makes us unaccountably happy.

This collection is divided into five sections. The first section "Land Centered," consists of essays by "flagrant dirt fanatics." The second section, "Kid Stuff" explores our early contact with dirt. The third is "Dirt Worship," on claiming our ancestry with the dirt. The fourth is "Dirt Facts," which offers insights into the scientific processes within dirt. The fifth and last section, "Native Soil," talks about the challenge of loving difficult ground.

Those of us who love dirt and growing things understand the sentiments of Deborah Koons Garcia: "Soil is one of the true miracles of this planet." Everything that has ever been on the earth eventually returns to the dirt. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust is a fact. The transformation and processes to return to dirt encompass changes and processes that few people think about.

I know my love of gardening and landscaping seems to be inborn, an innate instinct that can only be met by digging in the dirt. The dirt calls out to me as loudly as it calls out to my children. When they were young,

they were mud babies. They needed to play in the mud, getting covered head to toe. No scolding could keep them from this preoccupation with dirt. Perhaps there is an explanation for this. Peter Heller notes that, "I read that dirt has pheromones, or something, that come out of the ground and mix with our endocrine systems and give us a sense of well-being. In this way dirt is like potatoes and tobacco and opium."

This is a wonderfully organized and well thought out compilation of writing about dirt. I thoroughly enjoyed it!

Contents include:

Foreword: Scratching the Surface by Pam Houston

Preface: The God of Dirt by Barbara Richardson

LAND CENTERED: "MAGNIFICENTLY HUMBLE"

My Life in Dirt by Edward Kanze, Naturalist

The Great Beneath by Linda Hogan, Author

Dirt Fantasies by Jana Richman, Author

Praise to the Transformers by Janisse Ray, Author

Glosses on Dirt by Erica Olsen, Author

Soil Versus Dirt: A Reverie on Getting Down to Earth by Kayann Short, CSA Farmer

Digging In by Elias Amidon, Sufi Teacher

KID STUFF: "MAJOR IN MUD PIES"

Dirt Princess by Julene Bair, Author

The First Worm by John T. Price, Author

The Language of Clay by Roxanne Swentzell, Sculptor

Dirt: Imago Ignota by John Keeble, Author

Mud Pies by Chris Larson, Green Architect

Services at the Church of Dirt by Marilyn Krysl, Poet

DIRT WORSHIP: "THAT MOTHERLY FEELING"

Dreaming in Dirt by BK Loren, Author

Tao of Dirt by Liz Stephens, Author

The Life of Soil by Bernd Heinrich, Biologist

Dirt in Love by Barbara Richardson, Author

Dirt House by Peter Heller, Author

Sinking Down into Heaven by Jeanne Rogers, Artist and Author

DIRT FACTS: "INTERESTING SECRETS TO REVEAL"

The Soil's Breath by Tyler Volk, Biologist

Earthmover by Lisa Knopp, Author

Worm Herder: A Q and A With Dr. Diana H. Wall by Carrie Visintainer, Journalist

Seeing Soils by Deborah Koons Garcia, Filmmaker

The Next Big Thing in Soil Science by Carl Rosen, Soil Scientist

A Badge of Honor by Tom Wessels, Terrestrial Ecologist

Dirty Business by David R. Montgomery, Geomorphologist

Feed Your Soil by Bob Cannard and Fred Cline, Sustainable Farmer and Vintner

NATIVE SOIL: "LOVED AND PROTECTED"?

Hostile Takeovers: An Ode to Guts and Gardens by Laura Pritchett, Author

Fight the Power by Eban Goodstein, Environmental Economist

Born Again: Loving the Least Worst Land in Mississippi by Donald G. Schueler, Author

Stewards of the Land by Wes Jackson, Agricultural Activist

We Are Soil by Vandana Shiva, Soil and Seed Activist

City Dirt by Karen Washington, Urban Farmer

Soil Versus Oil - Kale Versus Koch by Atina Diffley, Organic Farmer

Contributors

Credits

Disclosure: My Kindle edition was courtesy of ForeEdge for review purposes.
