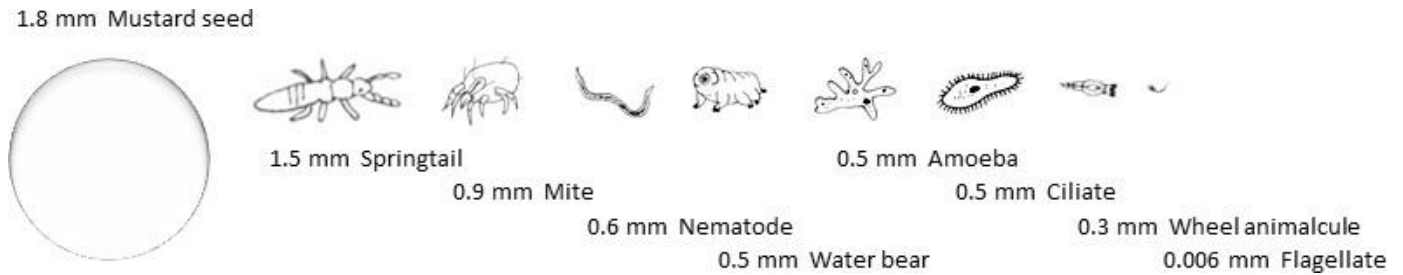


Eco Contemplative Liturgy, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 9.45am  
'Soil life'



*mikrobiomik.org Soil\_Microscopy\_Guide\_EN.pdf*

### Introduction

The soil around us is full of life. Microbes, miniscule creatures. When compared (simplistically) with the size of a mustard seed, a springtail is almost as large, a mite is half the size, nematodes, water bears, amoeba and ciliate are a third, a wheel animalcule even smaller, and then there are extremely tiny creatures like the flagellate that is 300th the size of a mustard seed. And there is much more.... microalgae, fungi, bacteria, archaea.... on and on!

**Sandra McInnes** *a tardigrade researcher with the British Antarctic Survey*

Tardigrades (water bears / moss piglets) can be seen with the naked eye, but just barely. They range from 0.05 to 1.2 mm long, but they usually don't get bigger than 1 mm according to the World Tardigrada Database. They grow to about the size of the period at the end of this sentence.

**Leyland Cecco** *in The Guardian (via Jo Hines)*

When Shelby Riskin and a graduate student peered through a microscope at samples of century-old soil from Toronto's waterfront, they watched in astonishment as a brown wormlike creature greedily munched through green clumps of algae as if more than 130 years hadn't passed since its last meal.

**Soil: our buried treasure** *by Anthony Anaxagorou*

How must it feel to be at the bottom of the world,  
To be marked and stomped by the galloping herd,  
To be neglected and abused for all this time,  
What does our thanks look like to you?  
You, who birthed the food which fills us,  
Stores away the carbon of harm,  
You, who give our walk strength, make the entire ground possible,  
And yet here we are.  
Eroding you, treating you like dirt, pushing you further into an exhausted bruise.  
We dump the burden of our cities on your back,  
Fill more of our money temples around the beat of your heart,  
So perhaps now would be the right time to stop and walk with you, learning more about your ways.  
Preserving your wonder,  
Hoisting you up from beneath our feet and into our sights,  
Celebrating the million ways you work,  
Allowing all of human existence to thrive,  
The tiny miracles you perform each day and each night,  
Like how in a single teaspoon of soil exist more microorganisms than people alive.

*The University of Reading commissioned this poem as part of a series of Royal Society activities on soil science*

### **Contemplative time**

We now have a time of silence in the garden, or if you are online, somewhere you feel you can connect with nature. Many of the soil inhabitants are fed by rotting matter so you might like to bury a leaf for them, or use one of these mustard seeds (though take note of where it is buried, if in the unlikely outcome that it sprouts, it will need to be weeded out before Catherine sees it!)

We have 15 minutes and I will ring this bell to call you back.

### **Time of sharing**

Please share, if you wish to, something that has arisen from your time of contemplation.

### **Mary Midgley in *Beast and Man***

The world in which the kestrel moves, the world that it sees, is, and always will be, entirely beyond us. That there are such worlds all around us is an essential feature of our world.

### **Julian and the nut by Simon Parke**

Julian of Norwich took a nut once,  
And suddenly, well –  
She was all over the place!

It became a universe in itself.  
It became the whole of creation!  
There in her hand.

And she knew nothing except that  
God made it  
God loves it  
And God keeps it.  
Which for nothing is quite a lot really.

God speaks through the strangest of things  
For those who have eyes to see.

Nuts.  
Definitely.

### **Prayer**

We are surrounded and supported by this ground, this earth around us. We are so grateful to those who care for our island, those we agree with and those we don't, old hands and new arrivals, united in bringing life and growth. Amen

### **Prayer (from *Equinox prayer* by Penelope Turton)**

Oh God, the source, sustainer, home and eternal end of all that exists, may all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and with all creation. May we learn to walk gently through the world all the days of our life, our hearts ready to be blown open by its beauty. Help us become a community where our vulnerabilities and our gifts are recognised and shared. Amen