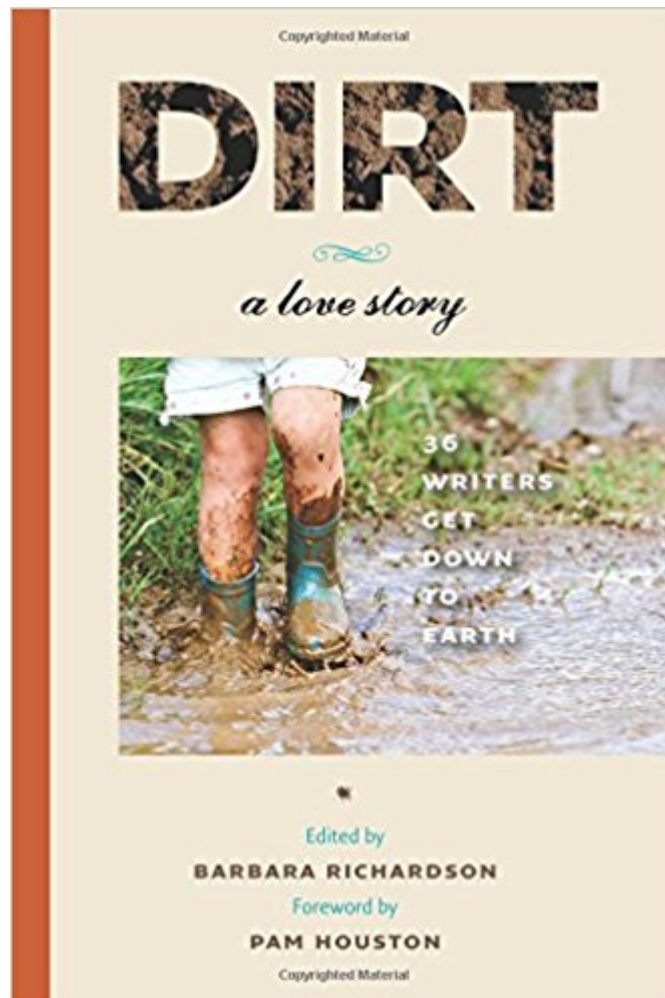




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Dirt: A Love Story



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Synopsis

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 twirl 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 Elias Amidon, Julene Bair, Bob Cannard, Fred Cline, Atina Diffley, Deborah Koons Garcia, Eban Goodstein, Bernd Heinrich, Peter Heller, Linda Hogan, Pam Houston, Wes Jackson, Edward Kanze, John Keeble, Lisa Knopp, Marilyn Krysl, Chris Larson, BK Loren, David R. Montgomery, Erica Olsen, John T. Price, Laura Pritchett, Janisse Ray, Barbara Richardson, Jana Richman, Jeanne Rogers, Carl Rosen, Don Schueler, Vandana Shiva, Kayann Short, Liz Stephens, Roxanne Swentzell, Carrie Visintainer, Tyler Volk, Karen Washington, and Tom Wessels.

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Customer Reviews

• "Deseret News" A love song to the humble earth beneath our feet, this is nature writing at its best.

• "Daily Camera" Dirt showcases an outstanding chorus of voices, allowing them to intertwine, resonate and amplify each other and build to a kind of lyrical crescendo that will leave readers eager to get out and get down in their own dirt, the lively soil that lives beneath all our feet.

• "Story Circle Book Reviews" Many of the essays make it seem as if organic methods have only advantages and no drawbacks, and to love the soil is to embrace this belief. For this reason, the main contribution of the book is to allow readers to get to know the organic community on a more personal basis, and in this respect the book is a triumph.

• "American Journal of Agricultural Economics

• "Add my name to the list of those who love to play in dirt, and know how much I love this anthology of vibrant voices celebrating, investigating, remembering the ways in which we are grounded in life, in memory, and in story by mud and dust. There is much here to laugh over, to learn about, to sing along with. Kick off your shoes, dig in your toes, and enjoy!"

• (Kim Barnes, author of *In the Kingdom of Men*)

I bought *Dirt: A Love Story* thinking that it was written primarily for gardeners and naturalists, but it has a variety of subjects including soil science, personal loss, gardening, philosophy, even humor that make *Dirt* a surprise and great read. But with all its diversity, a continuous thread of thought exists in this book that's expressed by author Barbara Richardson, "The artists, scientists, and authors in *Dirt: A Love Story* drag you outdoors, scuff your knuckles, and muddy your feet. They make dirt live and breathe again."

Numerous authors all saying exactly the same thing. Utterly repetitive. Lacking any soil science that would help one to better understand and appreciate what is going on in the dirt.

I can't remember the last time a book had such an immediate impact on my life. I was caught up in all the usual daily cares, chilled out and played when I could, and whenever I got the chance I would marvel at a nature I thought I knew. Now I'm aware of an epic, restless universe underfoot as well as up in the sky - and even though it's just this thin skin on top of solid rock, it now seems just as

mysterious and full of marvels. It even transformed my idea of what a book is made of, what a book can be. A friend and colleague noticed I had left my copy open and resting face down on a shelf, bending the pages and spine. She said if it were hers I would be punished. I resisted. I told her it was a book I needed to work with. It's a book that demands the reader to get down and dirty with. As the joke escalated, I realized it isn't a book that sits well with looking pretty and untouched on a shelf, but is best handled with dirty fingers and grappled with in the mud. In a moment of exuberant fervor that came from I know not where, I told her I would show her exactly how I needed to get down in the dirt with this particular book, opened the door, and threw it thirty feet into the driveway. I went out and threw it another thirty feet onto some gravel, then rubbed the cover in the dirt. That was as far as I took the joke, which was as much a longed-for catharsis as occasion for laughter. I really did have the sense that I was, in some small way, connecting the book - and myself - with its dirty origins. The family dog looked very confused (or maybe envious - who knows?). That's just one impulse this book has given me. Each has taken root in my imagination, and in my life. I am newly in awe of the epic battles of vast tribes of nematodes; of the animal magnetism that draws micro-organisms we barely understand to the roots of a plant as they meld together into the most immense, intricate and viscous waltz you can imagine and give birth to untold nourishment; of the boundless and eternal connection of dirt with our bodies and our myths. And my book has proved to be as sturdy and strong as the eponymous substance of its title - the spine and cover and pages are intact and ready and just as vivid as when I bought them. One would never guess the trials I put it through, save for a light patina of dirt on the back cover that seems destined to have found its way there.

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

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