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Fundamentals of Soil Science

2.1.2. Weathering

... There are many examples of weathering and can be observed every day. Rusting of metal and cracking of sidewalks are some examples. Weathering in soils results in destruction of existing minerals and synthesis of new minerals. Nutrients are made available for plants and clay minerals are formed. In a real sense, all life on earth is "locked" in the minerals and, through weathering, nutrients essential to life on the land are made available. ... Even life in the seas awaits nutrients released by weathering on the land and carried to the sea by rivers.

... Rocks and minerals, that are at or near equilibrium deep in the earth, adjust to the greatly reduced pressure and temperature in the soil environment (a new environment). The resulting adjustments or changes

are called **weathering**. The changes are in the direction of lower energy state and, to a large extent, are self-generating (exothermic). The response to reduced pressure is seen in the increased volume during **unloading**. Unloading is the removal of thick layers of sediment overlaying deeply buried rocks by erosion or uplift. The release of pressure results in an accompanying bit of expansion that produces cracks and fissures. Strains from temperature changes and the pressures of freezing water as well as the erosive action of water, wind, and ice also cause a slow and continuous breaking up of hard rocks. The response of minerals to reduced temperature is seen in the exothermic chemical reactions among minerals and the water, oxygen, and carbon dioxide in the soil. The abundance of water, oxygen, and carbon dioxide accounts for the fact that the major chemical weathering reactions are hydration, oxidation, and carbonation. An increase in volume goes with these reactions and causes a peeling off of rock surfaces

... Box 1 shows the weathering of olivine.

References

Foth, H. D. 1978. Fundamentals of
Soil Science. John Wiley & Sons,
New York, USA

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<p>Box 1: Weathering of Olivine</p>	<p>:</p>
<p>Models representing the weathering of olivine. Olivine is composed of silicon-oxygen tetrahedra held together by iron and magnesium. Every other tetrahedron is “inverted,” as shown by the light-colored tetrahedral in the olivine model on the left. During weathering the silicon-oxygen tetrahedra separate with the release of iron and magnesium (Source: Foth, 1978).</p>	<p>.</p> <p>—</p> <p>.</p> <p>.</p> <p>—</p> <p>:)</p> <p>.(</p>