

## HUMIC A HORIZON

Layman's description: Dark, crumbly with organic matter (usually in cool, moist areas)

- (i) contains, in some part, more than 1.8% organic carbon;
- (ii) contains less than 4 cmol(+) of exchangeable cations (Ca, Mg, K, Na) per kg clay for every one per cent of organic carbon present;
- (iii) does not show evidence of stripping of sesquioxide coatings from mineral particles;
- (iv) does not directly overlie a G horizon, an E horizon, a placic pan, a podzol B horizon, a soft plinthic B horizon, a hard plinthic B horizon, a prismatic B horizon, a red structured B horizon nor any other material with signs of wetness.

The humic A horizon has been defined to accommodate low base status, freely drained topsoil horizons which have accumulated relatively large amounts of humified organic matter in moist climates that are cool or cold. They differ from organic horizons in that drainage, both external and internal, is good. The humic horizon is a phenomenon associated with soils that have undergone moderate to strong weathering. As such they must be distinguished from dark coloured topsoil horizons (vertic and melanic) that are less weathered and richer in exchangeable base cations. Some humic horizons may closely resemble melanic horizons. The distinction is made by introducing base status limits in the respective definitions. Underlying B horizons often contain more than 1.8% organic carbon.