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Effect of soil properties and soil disturbance on frost heaving of mineral soil: a laboratory experiment

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Abstract: A laboratory experiment was done to identify the properties that make a substrate susceptible to frost heaving. Tests were carried out on nondisturbed soil cores (fresh and dry) of Ae and B horizons from sand, loamy sand, and sandy loam in a freezing cabinet ($-3.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$). Cores were continuously supplied with water from below. Freezing tests were repeated after soil disturbance (V-shaped furrow, 50% increase in surface area). The effects of texture, horizon, drying, and disturbance on frost heaving were tested using repeated-measures analysis of variance with soil elements (organic Al, organic Fe, inorganic Al, inorganic Fe, C, and N) and soil fractions (clay, fine silt, coarse silt, fine sand, and coarse sand) as covariates. The effect of horizon was as important as that of texture, and soil disturbance increased frost heaving. Disturbed fresh B horizon from loamy sand and sandy loam heaved the most (soil expansion $>5\%$ in height), whereas nondisturbed dry Ae horizon, regardless of texture, and nondisturbed dry B horizon from sand heaved the least (soil expansion $<0.8\%$ in height). Soil elements and fractions had an impact on frost heaving, especially organic Al, although it was of a smaller magnitude. Therefore, it is suggested that seedbeds or planting substrates be prepared by exposing the nondisturbed Ae horizon only, that is, without exposing or disturbing the B horizon.

Résumé : Une expérience en laboratoire a été réalisée dans le but d'identifier les propriétés d'un substrat qui le rendent susceptible au déchaussement par le gel. Les tests ont été réalisés dans un congélateur ($-3,5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) sur des carottes de sol non perturbé (frais et sec) provenant des horizons Ae et B dans des sables, des sables loameux et des loams sableux. La base des carottes était continuellement maintenue en contact avec de l'eau. Les tests de gel ont été répétés après avoir perturbé le sol (sillon en forme de V avec une augmentation de la surface de 50 %). Les effets de la texture, de l'horizon, du séchage et de la perturbation sur le déchaussement par le gel ont été testés avec une ANOVA sur des mesures répétées et avec des éléments du sol (Al organique, Fe organique, Al inorganique, Fe inorganique, C et N) et des fractions du sol (argile, limon fin, limon grossier, sable fin et sable grossier) comme covariables. L'horizon avait autant d'effet que la texture et la perturbation du sol a augmenté le déchaussement. L'horizon B frais et perturbé provenant des sables loameux et des loams sableux a subi le plus de déchaussement (expansion du sol en hauteur $>5\%$), tandis que l'horizon Ae sec et non perturbé, peu importe la texture, et l'horizon B sec et non perturbé provenant des sables ont subi le moins de déchaussement (expansion du sol $<0,8\%$). Bien que de moindre ampleur, les éléments et les fractions du sol avaient un impact sur le déchaussement, particulièrement Al organique. Par conséquent, on suggère de préparer les lits de germination ou les substrats de plantation en exposant seulement l'horizon Ae non perturbé, c'est-à-dire sans exposer ou perturber l'horizon B.

[Traduit par la Rédaction]

Introduction

Frost heaving is one of the main causes of seedling mortality in the early stages of boreal-forest regeneration (Winsa and Bergsten 1994; Goulet 1995; de Chantal et al. 2003). It occurs when the near-ground air temperature is just a few

degrees below freezing in the presence of a fairly constant supply of water from below to the freezing surface, and when snow cover is thin or absent (Goulet 1995; Bergsten et al. 2001). Under these conditions, needle ice forms at or near the soil surface, where ice crystals grow from below and push upwards (Goulet 1995). During this process, seed-

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