

# Odd Way to Say Spodosol

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This note is written to inform soil scientists that the odd way to pronounce the word Spodosol is really right.

Most people pronounce Spodosol with the first oh in the word as a long oh, like in the word ode. In those authoritative things that have been written about the nomenclature of *Soil Taxonomy*, however, it has been pointed out

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that the odd formative element of the word Spodosol is derived from Greek, *spodos*, for wood ash, and that the pronunciation of the formative element should be odd (Soil Survey Staff, 1960, p. 19; 1975, p. 87). I have been aware of this for a long time and have tried to promote the odd pronunciation of Spodosol. However, when I go to soil science meetings or otherwise I overhear other soil scientists saying Spohdosol, I realize that I haven't been a successful promotor of the odd way. Thus, as 1993 is upon us, I have resolved to redouble my efforts to promote the odd way. If I am successful, of course, it won't be odd to be around soil scientists who are saying Spodosol the odd way anymore. I ask other soil scientists for their support in this odd venture.

In writing this note, I decided to send a draft to my colleague, V.Z. Keramidas, at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, for his comments. Keramidas responded:

You are absolutely right about the pronunciation of the word Spodosol and nothing needs to be changed in your note. The Greek word *spodos* is pronounced with a **short** oh which rhymes closely with the English word **odd**. Hope that your efforts, therefore, will be fruitful and soil scientists will pronounce Spodosol the odd way in the future.

Keramidas goes on in his letter to add:

In Greek, the ancient word *spodos* does not exclusively mean wood ash. On the contrary, it is never used in this context anymore. Permit me to elaborate more. In ancient Greek, it meant the remains of the burning of any material (wood, any carbonaceous material, human and animal tissue) and it had the element of still being hot and had some small pieces of the material still burning. It was, therefore, also used for the light and fluffy material coming out from volcanoes and redeposited in great distances, because the ancient Greeks thought it to be the left over from the burning of rocks.

In modern Greek, it is used exclusively for the ashy volcanic material produced during volcanic eruptions (it is a synonym for volcanic ash) and very rarely for the remains of the human body after cremation. It is never used for and does not by any means imply wood ash. For the latter we have another word. These for the sake of truth.

## References

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