

Soil of the Tarnished Bounty

Description: about a pound or so of soil, reddish-black in color, stored in a bag made from a dubious leather. It is perpetually damp to the touch, leaving an unpleasant smelling stain that cannot be removed by any kind of cleanser. Any stain that comes from casual contact with flesh will eventually fade away as new layers of skin form, but long-term users of Soil of the Tarnished Bounty can end up with a mark that goes all the way down to the bone marrow.

Use: Scattering the Soil on the ground -- a pound can 'prime' about a quarter of an acre's worth of land -- makes it much easier to grow **bad** things there for the next growing season (it usually takes a decade or so for the land to recover fully). Plants with malice in their taproots, or a taste for blood; trees that move against the wind and snatch up small creatures for chill offerings to the winter moon; things that use their thorny tendrils walk and stalk and seek out throats. And, of course, scattering the Soil in a cemetery is a quick way to raise the shambling hungry dead, but that's considered an inefficient use of resources by those with an interest and delight in such dark deeds.

The Soil of the Tarnished Bounty cannot be **made**; although certain foolish mortal dark mages have tried, inevitably to their doom. It is instead a gift, as well as a task; when those that provide the Soil give it out as a boon, it is understood that the soil must be used, and soon. Some dark mages have tried to hoard the Soil, instead; their doom is also inevitable, comes rather sooner, and will often prove very instructive to the interested observer. Evil may be patient, but those that provide the Soil are never slothful.

It is by the way very rare for more than a pound of the Soil to be handed out at any given time. The Soil of the Tarnished Bounty is an *artisanal* horror, meant for smallish tableaux of horror and suffering. Too much use of it attracts the attention of Those who Smite corruption with the cleansing flames, after all. Better to save it for horrors that are well-crafted, elegant, and *personal*. And it must be used carefully, not squandered. If not: well, one should expect malicious punishments from those steeped in malice.

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