Spodosols formed from weathering processes that strip organic matter combined with aluminum (with or without iron) from the surface layer and deposit them in the subsoil. In undisturbed areas, a gray eluvial horizon that has the color of uncoated quartz overlies a reddish brown or black subsoil.

Spodosols commonly occur in areas of coarse-textured deposits under coniferous forests of humid regions. They tend to be acid and infertile.

Spodosols make up about 4% of the world’s ice-free land surface.