



OUR PEAT-FREE POTTING MIX RECIPES

PEAT-FREE POTTING MIX – Result from our experiments. Over 200 small pots of plants were tested in all sorts of combination of potting mixes. Eventually we settled on the simplest mix that the plants grew well in. We grow hundreds of plants in peat-free compost since 2002. It is a myth that you can't grow plants well in such composts. Please note that areas the size of cities are stripped of peat in the Baltic States and Russia – you can see these from Google Earth.

The Wood chip can be recently chipped but should not have any leaves in. Broadleaf and Conifer chip such as Pine and Spruce work very well on all plants. Leylandii and Larch chip should be avoided.

For Outside Tubs – Shrubs and Trees

90% WOOD CHIP OR BARK + 10% soil loam (brown garden soil without roots eg mole hill soil – Mix in 5 grams per litre of 18 month Osmocote (from ebay) – Other brands don't last as long. The 18 month fertiliser takes a few months to start working. This mix does have earthworms in but the cold-tolerant temperate plants seem to be able to deal with them.

For Houseplants – Tropical Mix

100% MELCOURT FINE BARK MINI CHIPS (to avoid earthworms) – Mix in 5 grams per litre of 8-9 month Osmocote (from ebay).

For specialist tropical plants requiring winter heat

90% MELCOURT FINE BARK MINI CHIPS + 5% Vermiculite (for holding nutrients) 5% chopped Sphagnum (for holding water) – Mix in 5 grams per litre of 8-9 month Osmocote. This is very free-draining and needs constant watering at first. However, it helps tropicals get through a winter.

Note : earthworms are a problem for all wood chip composts in pots. They turn the chip into solid worm casts that suffocate the roots. The best method to rid a pot of worms is put a tea spoon of mustard in a litre of warm water and remove them. You can take the plant out of its pot first..NB our pine bark mix deters earthworms.

For Cuttings – Vermiculite, Coir or Perlite

These are all sterile and have no nutrients to reduce fungal problems. Perlite will need more care as it dries out faster – it is the best of all media as it doesn't attract algae.. Stick cuttings down side of pots to decrease chance of rotting. Avoid more than four cuttings per pot.



We now use an aeroponics set up with 2x Arcadia lights on the plastic lid. Cuttings root in ten days and are big enough to pot on within 3 weeks.

For Seeds – Fine grade angular Leca clay on top. Alternatively you can use perlite or vermiculite. Sterile and has no nutrients, important for reducing fungi problems.

To conclude: The advantages of mixing your own potting compost are that it is a living compost packed with beneficial micro-organisms. It is far cheaper than commercial compost bags, the nutrients last longer using Osmocote and you are not contributing to destroying other country's natural habitats.

PLEASE START ASKING YOUR GARDEN CENTRE AND SUPERMARKET IF THEY HAVE ANY PEAT-FREE GROWN PLANTS – IF WE ALL CREATE THE PRESSURE, THEY WILL CHANGE.