

Information Sheet No. 6-1

Buy quality recycled organics products

Information Sheet No. 6-1
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Introduction

Recycled organics (RO) products are manufactured from a range of compostable organic materials (garden organics, food organics, residual wood and timber, *biosolids* and agricultural organics). Products containing 100% RO content or smaller proportions of RO are referred to as RO products.

This package of Information Sheets and Internet-based resources aim to inform potential buyers of products containing RO, of:

- The range of products available with an RO content;
- The benefits of these products to the environment;
- Methods of identifying the best RO product for their requirements;
- Applications of RO products, and
- Potential risks associated with the inappropriate use of these products.

RO or products containing RO include:

- Mulches;
- Soil conditioners;
- Potting mixes;
- Blended or organic soils (topsoil applications)
- Top dressing;
- Low density soils, and
- Playground surfacing.

Within each product category, there can be a number of products suitable for specialised applications. For example general potting mixes are suitable for growing a wide range of plants in containers, whereas a specialist potting mix may be required to grow a particular type of

plant with individual and specific requirements, e.g. orchids.

What is quality?

In the context of this package of Information Sheets, quality products are defined as products free from known risks that are 'fit-for-purpose'.

These products do not need to be of the highest quality, but need to be suitable for the task at hand and be consistent in attributes and performance.

It is important for consumers to differentiate between high and low quality products and to be able to select products that are appropriate to specific applications and their needs.

The "Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products" Information Sheet series will help buyers purchase quality products that are fit-for-purchase and appropriate to their needs.



RO products contribute to cost savings and also benefit our environment!

Benefits of recycled organics

Products containing RO can significantly improve soil health and plant establishment and vitality, whilst reducing pressures on the environment by closing the recycling loop.

In addition to recovering clean resources, products containing RO represent excellent value for money and have a number of advantages over non-recycled products.

Return on investment

RO products provide benefits to a range of soil physical and chemical properties, which directly and indirectly improves soils, plant growth and the environment.

When products containing RO are used to maintain the landscaped environment, significant savings arise from increased moisture retention, weed suppression, reduced inorganic fertiliser, herbicide requirements, and reduced maintenance and management requirements.

What to buy

Buyers can select from a wide range of RO products that are suited to various applications including:

- Potted plants
- Home gardens
- Commercial landscaping
- New housing developments
- Parks, gardens, playgrounds and other community open spaces
- Roadside applications
- Forestry and agricultural applications, and
- Mine site applications

Selection of products appropriate to your needs is important to avoid possible detrimental impacts on soil, plant, animal and human health.

Buy recycled (or recycled organics content)

Buyers should consider purchasing RO products, or products containing RO, over other horticultural and landscape products that are manufactured from non-recycled materials (e.g. soils mined from the environment).

RO products impact less on the environment and provide a range of benefits to our gardens from the addition of organic matter to soils. The higher the RO content, the more beneficial organic matter the product contains (see Information Sheet 6.2).

RO products offer similar or greater benefits to alternative non-recycled products.

Buy quality

Buyers need to purchase quality products that offer reliable and consistent performance. Quality products:

- Provide reliable performance;
- Have easy to identify applications, and
- Are free from weeds and animal/plant pathogens.

Buy local

RO products are manufactured in many areas from local materials. When consumers buy RO products that are made from local resources, they reduce environmental impacts and support their local economy and local employment opportunities.

Relevance to WRAPPs

This series of Information Sheets complements the organics component of the Waste Reduction and Procurement Policy (WRAPP) document produced by the NSW Waste Boards (Southern Sydney Waste Board, 1999).

The use of products containing RO conforms to the waste management hierarchy, as it presents an environmentally beneficial alternative to the disposal of 'waste' products in landfill.

Furthermore, the purchase and use of products containing RO is in accordance with the Local Government Act (1993) and associated amendments, which require that the principles of

ecologically sustainable development be incorporated into planning activities of every local government.

This series of Information Sheets will facilitate local government compliance to the procurement principles described in the WRAPPs document, which states that purchases should be made on the basis of:

- Best value for money;
- They withstand public scrutiny;
- All suppliers are given equal opportunities, and
- Compliance of procedures to council policies.

Local government awareness of the benefits of RO and potential risks associated with low quality products will be increased through this Information Sheet series.

Information sheets in this series

The "Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products" Information Sheets and web resources can be viewed independently or in combination with one another (Figure 1).

This series of Information Sheets is designed to highlight the benefits of RO products, while at the same time increasing consumer awareness of the potential of using poor quality products or use of products that are inappropriate to their needs.

Information Sheet No. 6-2 identifies the direct and indirect benefits of products containing RO on soil physical and chemical properties including:

- Soil organic matter
- Soil nutrients
- Erosion control
- Landscape rehabilitation

Other benefits such as maintenance and management reductions are also discussed.

Information Sheet No. 6-3 describes methods of increasing soil organic matter levels, including:

- Retention of crop residues;
- Incorporation of crop residues;
- Crop rotations and fallowing;
- Altering tillage regimes;
- Fertilising surface vegetation to increase biomass levels;
- Applying green manures to soil, and
- Applying on-farm or imported composted materials to soil.

Information Sheet No. 6-4 describes relevant issues for the purchase of quality RO products. Potential risks associated with the inappropriate or incorrect use of RO and the use of low quality RO are highlighted. Detailed information to assist with product selection is presented.

Information Sheet No. 6-5 assists consumers with the selection of products that are appropriate to their intended use.

Information Sheet No. 6-6 describes issues relating to product and soil electrical conductivity.

Summary information about individual product types and their application is given.

On-line product selector!

An Internet-based guide (Product Selector) for the selection of RO products is available at the following address:

<http://www.recycledorganics.com/>

The Product Selector takes users through a series of steps for the identification of the best RO product for their needs. Simple menus and descriptions of products are used to guide a user through this process (e.g. Figure 2).

After the first selection, users are directed to a general product page

Figure 1. Information sheets within the Buyers Guide for Recycled Organics Products.

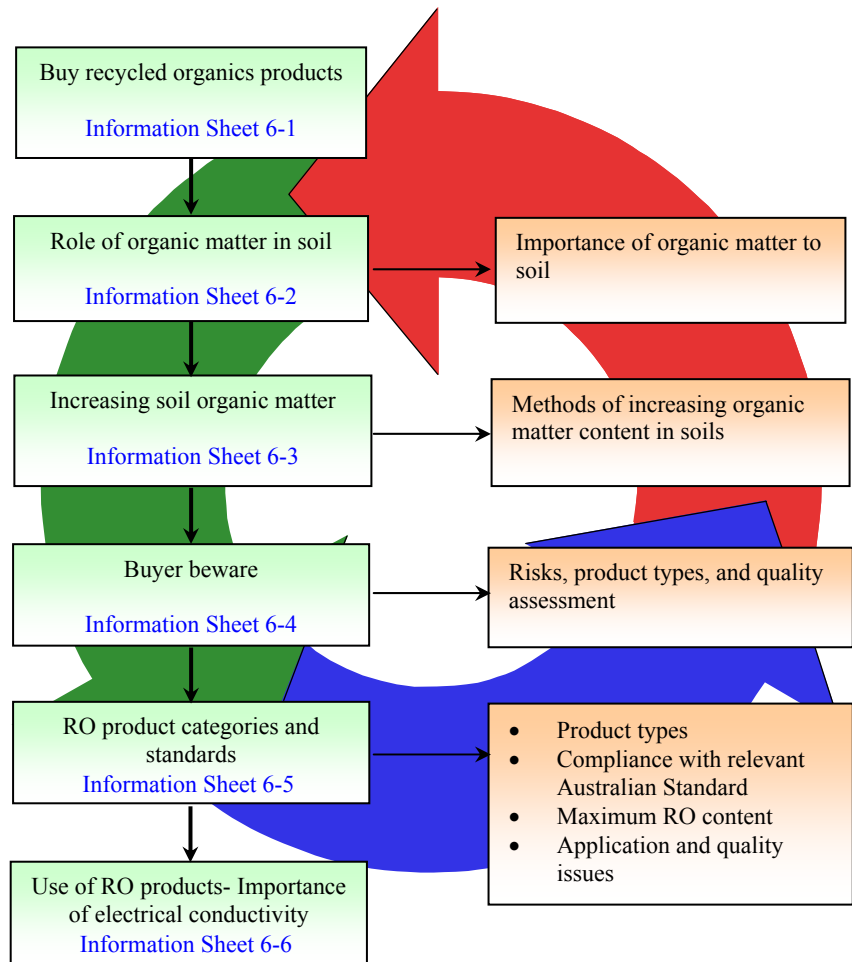
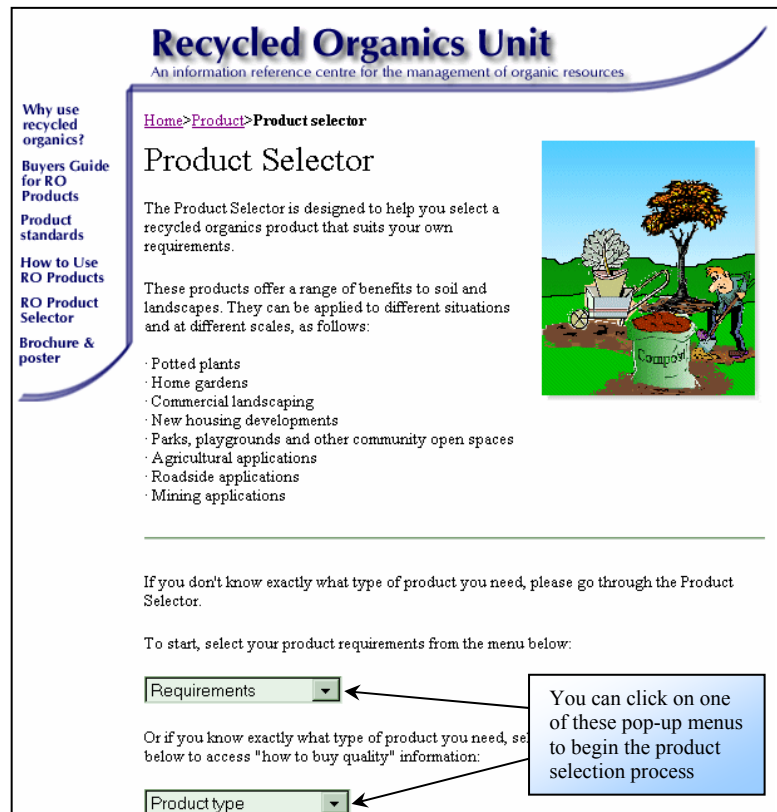


Figure 2. Example of the Product Selector, showing the production selection menu (bottom left). This is available from <http://www.recycledorganics.com>

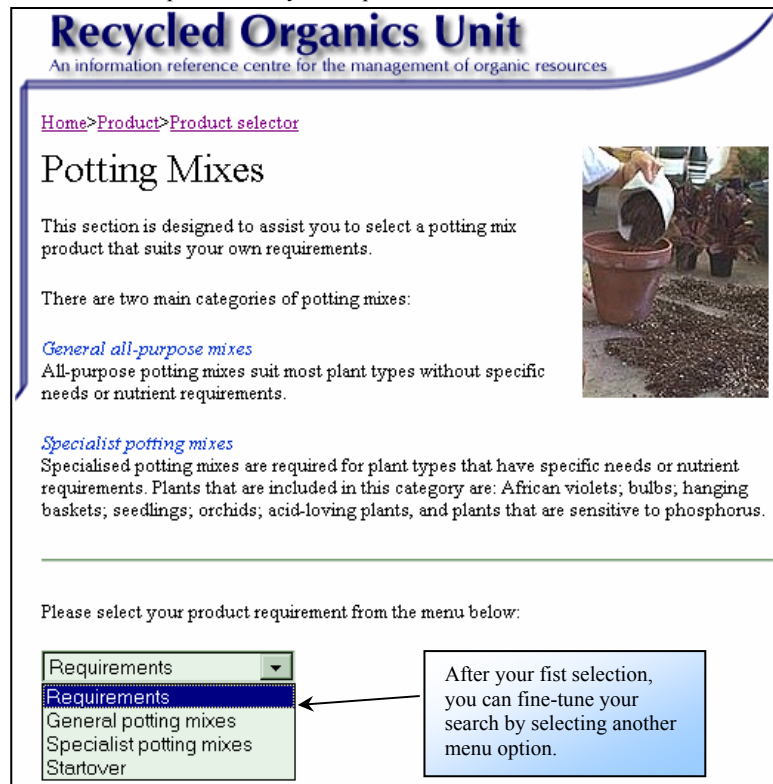


(Figure 3) to fine-tune their search for a suitable product.

The final step in the product selection process takes users to a web page that has detailed information about a product and relevant standards that are associated with the product (Figure 4).

Links are provided at this point to take users to relevant “*How to use recycled organics products*” Information Sheets that provide detailed product use information.

Figure 3. The product selector will take you through a series of steps to help you find a product that is compatible with your requirements.



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[Home](#) > [Product](#) > [Product selector](#)

Potting Mixes

This section is designed to assist you to select a potting mix product that suits your own requirements.

There are two main categories of potting mixes:

General all-purpose mixes
All-purpose potting mixes suit most plant types without specific needs or nutrient requirements.

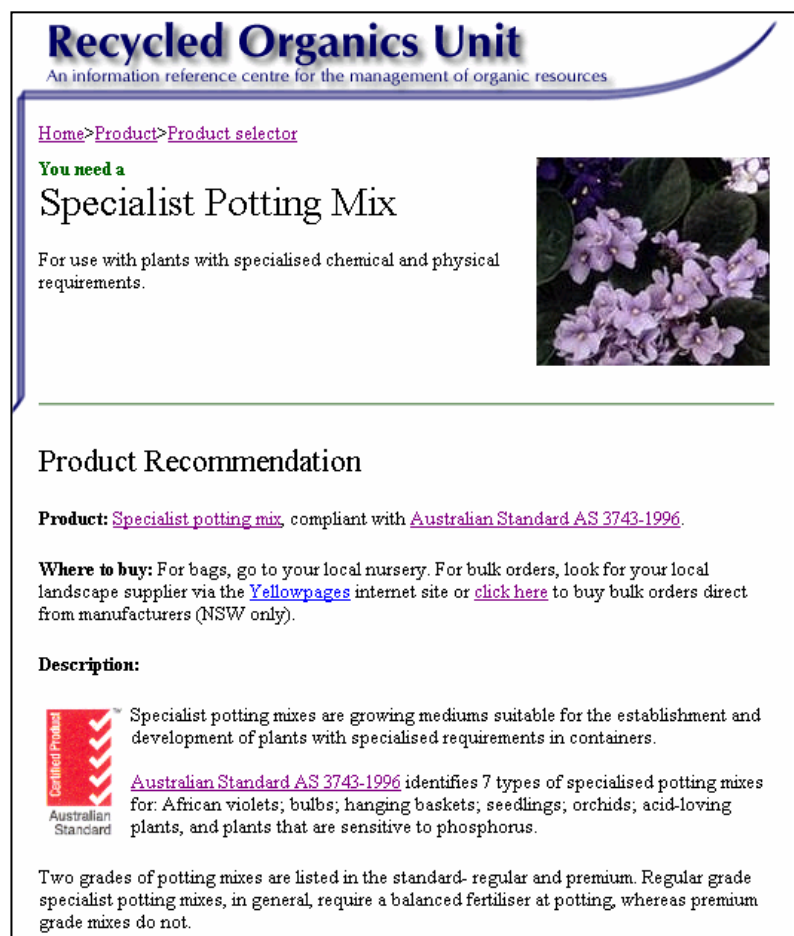
Specialist potting mixes
Specialised potting mixes are required for plant types that have specific needs or nutrient requirements. Plants that are included in this category are: African violets; bulbs; hanging baskets; seedlings; orchids; acid-loving plants, and plants that are sensitive to phosphorus.

Please select your product requirement from the menu below:

Requirements
Requirements
General potting mixes
Specialist potting mixes
Startover

After your first selection, you can fine-tune your search by selecting another menu option.

Figure 4. Final stage in the product selection process, showing you how to identify quality products such as those compliant with an Australian Standard.



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[Home](#) > [Product](#) > [Product selector](#)

You need a
Specialist Potting Mix


For use with plants with specialised chemical and physical requirements.

Product Recommendation

Product: [Specialist potting mix](#), compliant with [Australian Standard AS 3743-1996](#).

Where to buy: For bags, go to your local nursery. For bulk orders, look for your local landscape supplier via the [Yellowpages](#) internet site or [click here](#) to buy bulk orders direct from manufacturers (NSW only).

Description:

 Specialist potting mixes are growing mediums suitable for the establishment and development of plants with specialised requirements in containers.

[Australian Standard AS 3743-1996](#) identifies 7 types of specialised potting mixes for: African violets; bulbs; hanging baskets; seedlings; orchids; acid-loving plants, and plants that are sensitive to phosphorus.

Two grades of potting mixes are listed in the standard- regular and premium. Regular grade specialist potting mixes, in general, require a balanced fertiliser at potting, whereas premium grade mixes do not.

