

Information Sheet No. 7-3-3

Soil blend products

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Definition

Soil blend products are *general-purpose soils* used for topsoil applications and garden beds. Soil blends are derived from the blending of two or more of: sand; *natural soil* material and organic materials to achieve a bulk density of greater than 0.7 kg/L, and an organic matter content in the range 3% to 15% by mass (Standards Australia AS 4419, 2002). See Information Sheet No. 3-10, “*Introduction to Australian Standard AS 4419–2002 soils for landscaping and garden use*” in the “*Producing Quality Compost*” package of Information Sheets for more details (Recycled Organics Unit 2002a).

The organic matter fraction in soil blends may be made from *recycled organics* products.

Uses

Soil blend products tend to be used primarily for general landscaping, including topsoil and garden bed applications.

Top-dressing soil blends are used for surface application to lawns to improve turf growth through the

provision of nutrients, increased nutrient retention and better surface drainage.

Benefits

The clay content of these soils helps bind plant nutrients and organic matter when incorporated into an existing soil.

Risks

Soil blends with a clay content above 40%, are considered by Australian Standard–AS 4419 (2002) to be unsuitable for general landscaping purposes.

This is due to the high bulk density, making handling difficult, and the high clay content that may deleteriously affect plant growth.

High clay content soils tend to have low air-filled porosity, poor drainage, reduced water infiltration and susceptibility to water logging. These factors can seriously affect plant growth.

Additives

The addition of a nitrogenous fertiliser to soil blends that are low in nitrogen ensures that these soils will

Plate 1. Photograph of a soil blend (left) used for general landscaping purposes (right).



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not cause nitrogen deficiency in plants.

Application rates

The Standard recommends that soil blends be not applied to a depth of any more than 150 mm. This is because at greater depths, putrefaction of the lower layers is likely and this can damage plants.

Where greater soil depths are required, the lower part of the new soil should be made of mineral soil with a similar or finer texture to the soil blend applied above it.

Application methods

Applications to garden beds and relatively small areas can be done with a wheel barrow, spade and rake.

For larger landscaping applications, soil blends can be added with a skid steer loader (e.g. bobcat).

Definitions*

General purpose soil

A material consisting of natural soil, amended natural soil, a blend of sand and organic materials or a blend of sand, natural soil materials and organic materials, which is suitable for the culture of plants usually grown in domestic gardens and landscaped areas.

Natural soil

A soil that has been dug from the landscape and is presented for use with no more than minor amendment. This soil could be topsoil, subsoil or a mixture of them. Typically it will have a bulk density of greater than 0.7 kg/L.

Recycled organics

The term Recycled Organics has been adopted by Resource NSW as a generic term for a range of products manufactured from compostable organic materials (garden organics, food organics, residual wood and timber, biosolids and agricultural organics).

Top dressing

A soil which is suitable for surface application to lawn.

* Recycled Organics Unit (2002b).

Important references

- Recycled Organics Unit (2002a). Producing Quality Compost: Operation and management guide to support the consistent production of quality compost and products containing recycled organics. Third Edition. Recycled Organics Unit, internet publication: <http://www.recycledorganics.com>
- Recycled Organics Unit (2002b). Recycled Organics Industry Dictionary & Thesaurus: standard terminology for the recycled organics industry. Recycled Organics Unit, internet publication: <http://www.rolibrary.com>
- Standards Australia (2002). AS 4419—Soils for landscaping and garden use. Standards Australia, Homebush, NSW.

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