

Potting Mix

By: Melinda Sperl

If you have planter pots it can be very frustrating to get the right potting mix for your plants. Most plants can use standard potting mix but some plants need specific soils. It is really important to know what your plants require, for example an orchid has very specific soil requirements. Even between orchids they can have different requirements. Cactus and other succulents need a sandy type mix that holds less water.

To make your own potting mix instead of buying the commercial mix, use the following:

- 8 quarts potting soil (commercial or your yard)
- 1 quart perlite
- 1 quart vermiculite
- 8 quarts sphagnum peat moss
- 1 cup very coarse or green sand
- 1 cup gypsum

Mix all this in a large trash can. Adding manure or a slow release coated fertilizer like Osmocote can help fertilize your plants for several months. This is just a basic mix and you can vary it depending on your plant needs.

To help you understand what these ingredients are, I have broken them down a bit:

- Sphagnum peat moss is lightweight and absorbs water. The bad part of it is, if it dries out it can be very hard to get fully wet again. If you have watered a plant only to put your hand an inch down to find the soil totally dry again, this mix has too much peat moss in it. Once it gets wet it will stay wet, which is why it is good for pots, but you have to continuously water it. Trickle/drip irrigation or soaking the pot in water for a short time is a good way to do this.
- Vermiculite is a naturally occurring product that is also used to absorb water for the plant to use.
- Perlite is formed from volcanic material and is used with the sand and gypsum to keep the potting soil from compacting.

Drip irrigation is the easiest way to ensure beautiful potted plants. This is easy to attach to your irrigation system. If you haven't done this yet, give us a call.

Happy Gardening!

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