



Peat Moss

About peat Moss

Peat moss is used in the production of many horticultural crops. "Peat moss is a term used in the trade for dead, fibrous, slightly humified moss that has been excavated from peat bogs, dried to a moisture content not exceeding 30 percent, shredded, screened into sizes according to the requirement of the trade, and pressed into bales or smaller packages."

"Sphagnum peat forms on poorly and very poorly drained sites which are isolated from nutrient rich ground waters and thus moisture is supplied only by rain."



Peat comes in various forms and of differing qualities.

Characteristics & Qualities of Peat

Characteristics of Peat

Organic matter	An acceptable quality peat should be at least 80% organic matter. A high quality peat contains 95% organic matter on a dry weight basis.
pH	Depending on peat type, pH can range from a very acid 3.6 to slightly alkaline 7.5. Low lime peats have a pH value below 5.0 and are usually calcium deficient. High lime peats have a pH above 5.0 and are usually calcium sufficient.
Percent water	Percent water is correctly expressed on an oven-dry basis. Thus, a water content of 100% means the weight of the water equals the weight of the peat. Percent water is also often expressed on a moist weight basis (i.e., the weight of water as a percent of the total weight of the peat and water).
Weed seed content	Sphagnum peat moss is virtually free of weed seeds, while reed-sedge and peat humus may contain weed seeds.
Water holding capacity	Sphagnum peat can adsorb 20 to 30 times its dry weight in water, while hypnum peat and reed-sedge peat can adsorb 5 to 7 times their dry weight.
Nitrogen content	The nitrogen content determines fertilizer requirements. Peats low in nitrogen will require supplemental fertilization for healthy plant growth. Much of the nitrogen in peat is tied up in the organic residue, and is slowly released over a long period of time as the organic matter decomposes.
Structure	Most baled peats look and feel fibrous or felty in structure, while packaged peat may be pulpy or spongy.

Characteristics of sphagnum peat and other horticultural peats

Type of Peat	Range of Nitrogen (%)	Range of Water Absorbing Capacity (%)	Range in Ash Content (%)	Range in pH	Range in Volume Weights (lbs./ft.3)
Sphagnum moss peat	0.6-1.4	1,500-3,000	1.0-5.0	3.0-4.0	4.5-7.0
Hypnum moss peat	2.0-3.5	1,200-1,800	4.0-10.0	5.0-7.0	5.0-10.0
Reed-sedge peat (low lime)	1.5-3.0	500-1,200	5.0-15.0	4.0-5.0	10-15.0
Reed-sedge peat (high lime)	2.0-3.5	400-1,200	5.0-18.0	5.1-7.5	10.0-18.0
Decomposed peat	2.0-3.5	150-500	10.0-50.0	5.0-7.5	10.0-40.0

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