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GROMOR OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

Taking into account economics and growing needs, it's not possible for one growing medium formulation to meet all requirements.

In my earlier days, riversand on it's own or mixed with 10% topsoil was the most commonly used, but it was not particularly successful.

Then along came sphagnum peat, which to my mind remains the "Rolls Royce" of growing mediums. Unfortunately, price and the environmental damage done to peat bogs with drainage during extraction, together with cost, has largely restricted it's use.

The medium that has come closest to sphagnum peat in quality is probably coir fibre, but it too is expensive. Then there are the artificial ones. But again cost, in addition to the limited range that they can be used for, is a problem.

Despite composted screened pinebark coming in for a fair amount of criticism, it remains the most widely used growing medium. Whilst care must be taken when composting and screening, it can form a valuable and very competitive growing medium and seedlingmix base. Where problems have arisen, it has been mainly with the seedlingmix, so as a safety precaution a percentage of coir fibre is included in the GROMOR SEEDLINGMIX.

GROMOR Growing Medium and Seedlingmix are pre-enriched with macro and micro nutrients, but being well drained these will be leached out. For optimum growth, regular *fertilizing is essential.

*preferably once a week, EXCEPT for seedlings which should receive straight water from planting to ± 3 weeks after germination.

*fertilize with GROMOR 3.1.3(37) ws complete, diluted at 1g/l water, leaching once a week with straight water to prevent an EC build up.

Whilst on fertilizing, take care about being talked into using a SLOW RELEASE fertilizer to add to the GROWING MEDIUM before planting. The nitrogen is invariably Urea, that releases as ammonia, which is far from ideal. There are still people who blend GROMOR POTTING MEDIUM with compost, garden soil, riversand, Accelerator etc. This is NOT a good idea!

SOIL ANALYSIS

Maybe my comments on the Albrecht System last month about it being strictly based on cation ratios was not quiet fair. It recognises that the ratios do become less important as soil organic matter increases to over 5%

SNIPPETS from the past

Spraying Inoculum? First build up soil so that it will support biological life which will in the end be dominated by locally adapted strains. Apply compost; its huge diversity of micro-organisms will restore balance - Prof Elaine Ingham

Highly fertilized, green grass pastures look great, but are basically unpalatable. Whole grains cause acidosis in the gut of animals. This can be overcome by sprouting it - Gary Zimmer.

Excess potassium (K) will limit calcium uptake - Jerry Brunetti

EARTHWORMS AND MOLES

These are nature's "ploughs", ensuring that the soil stays aerobic and healthy. DON'T KILL THEM with poisons – change your attitude towards moles! Spread the soil from the mounds and take it as a compliment that they like your garden soil.

Earthworms thrive in healthy fertile soil, enriching them with plant food and growth stimulants.

OXYGEN, the neglected nutrient!

Oxygen is probably the most neglected “nutrient” in CONTAINER GROWING. Because an oxygen deficiency shows up in leaves as a standard elemental (N, P, K, Ca, Mg etc.) deficiency, it is invariably wrongly diagnosed! The first symptom is a yellowing of leaves, followed by wilting and finally root diseases. Simply put, the roots cannot function efficiently when deprived of oxygen and cannot take up nutrients required for healthy growth.

The cause of this problem is invariably a very nice looking, FINE TEXTURED, POTTING MEDIUM. Such medium simply do not drain well. (you may not particularly like the coarse particles of composted bark in Gromor Potting Medium, but I assure you that pot plant roots, lap them up!)

Also remember that the root space in a pot is limited, as is the ability of a coarse medium to hold nutrients. For these reasons give your potplants a weekly feed: - A GOOD WATERING with a solution comprising a TEASPOON of GROMOR PLANT FOOD in 5ℓ water.

Rather than giving frequent light waterings, give your potplants a heavy watering twice a week, ensuring that you have at least 20% run off. Doing this just prior to (NOT AFTER) feeding, “kills 2 birds with one stone!” Finally, don’t forget that any organic medium will continue “breaking down” (composting) in the container and that both dead and live roots slowly fill the “air spaces”, all of which further reduce oxygen to the roots. For this reason, ANNUAL REPOTTING of potplants is advised.

For DECORATIVE purposes, potplants can be MULCHED, with BARK NUGGETS or PEBBLES.

FLOWER/VEG BEDS

Digging and turning the soil stimulates soil microbes over the short term, but in the medium to long term, depletes soil organic matter, which upsets the balance of soil microbial life, favouring the pathogenic (disease causing) organisms, over the beneficial ones.

The injudicious application of chemical fertilizers has the same effect. It is therefore preferable to stimulate plant growth by including Organics e.g. apply GROMOR COMPOST (1 bag/5-10m²).

In a NO-TILL (NO DIGGING), system, beneficial soil organisms, mainly actinomycetes and fungi, slowly break down plant debris on the soil surface and move it steadily into the soil. This does not hamper plant growth and maintains a healthy, well balanced soil microbial population, with humus “build-up”. (Bill Kerr). The process is aided by the application of mulch. (GROMOR PINEBARK MULCH)

I’ve noticed that in many cases where gardeners are disappointed with their vegetable beds, it’s often a fundamental problem of them being established on excavation fill and/or there is excess shade. This doesn’t affect flower beds to nearly the same extent.

Regards,

GROMOR (PTY) LTD

R. HAGEN

PS: No jokes this month, but I think that the quote from Abe Lincoln is very applicable to today’s South Africa

You cannot strengthen the weak, by weakening the strong.

You cannot help small men by tearing down big men.

You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer.

You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income.

You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatreds.

You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they should do for themselves.