



APCC Cape Cod Native Plant Growers' Cooperative

Green Growing Standards: Peat-free Potting Soils

Executive Statement: APCC requires that all growers participating in the Growers' Cooperative use potting soils that are free of peat moss. An exception is made for germination where some mixes with peat may remain the best option.

Background/Why: Peatlands occupy only around three percent of the land on Earth, and yet they are a reserve for one third of the world's carbon. This is nearly double the amount stored in the world's forests. In addition to carbon storage, peatlands play a crucial role in holding and filtering water, and provide habitat for a rare assortment of plant and animal species.

These rare ecosystems face many challenges: About 12 percent of peatlands have been drained to make way for agricultural and forestry uses, with the peat itself harvested for potting mixes or fuel. In 2023, the United States harvested 360,000 metric tons of peat, and imported 1.1 million metric tons, primarily for horticultural purposes.

It is clear that our use of and demand for peat potting mixes actively contributes to the loss of this significant habitat. Peatlands cannot simply be restored, as these ecosystems take hundreds, if not thousands of years to recover from peat harvesting. These degraded peatlands become carbon sources, contributing around four percent annually to human-caused emissions. It is critical to understand that a key part in conserving peatlands is to reduce our reliance on peat in potting mixes.

How this fits into the Growers' Coop Program: APCC requires that growers participating in the Native Plant Growers' Cooperative use peat-free potting soils used to grow out plants. At this time, germination mixes containing peat will still be allowed as we continue our research into a more sustainable alternative. However, we still ask that growers select germination mixes with focus on peat reduction, selecting mixes with a low percentage of peat.

Recommended Soil Alternatives

Seed Starting Mixes

Without Peat

- Organic Mechanics – Seed Starting Blend - <https://organicmechanicsoil.com/products/organic-seed-starting-mix-for-sale>
- Back to the Roots – Organic Seed Starting Mix (for small-scale growers) - <https://backtotheroots.com/products/organic-seed-starting-mix-specialty-blend-6-qt>
- Back to the Roots – Organic Expanding Seed Starting Soil (for small scale growers) - <https://backtotheroots.com/products/organic-expanding-seed-starting-soil-8-qt>

With Reduced Peat

- Vermont Compost Company – Fort Light - <https://vermontcompost.com/fort-light>

Potting Mixes (for growing out transplants)

Without Peat

- FoxFarm – Bush Doctor Coco Loco Potting Mix - <https://foxfarm.com/product/bush-doctor-coco-loco-potting-mix/>
- PittMoss – Plentiful Organic Potting Mix - <https://pittmoss.com/product/plentiful/>