



## **APCC Cape Cod Native Plant Growers' Cooperative**

### **Green Growing Standard: Minimizing Plastic Use**

**Executive Statement:** APCC requires that all growers participating in the Growers' Cooperative reduce plastic waste and use plastic alternatives whenever possible. Participating growers will be asked to identify their plastic reduction plan to which they will adhere to.

**Background/Why:** A dark side of the horticultural industry is the reliance on plastic that is largely single-use and not recyclable in our region. About 98 percent of perennials and 68 percent of shrubs are currently sold in petroleum-based plastic pots, and 90 percent of these pots are produced from virgin plastic and are made to be single use. These plastic pots contain different polymers that do not melt at the same temperature, making the recycling process costly and time-consuming and the process requires the addition of virgin plastic.

Further, the closest recycling facility to our region is in Michigan, meaning even recycling plastic materials comes with a large carbon footprint. About 98 percent of plastic pots end up in the trash waste stream after just a single use.

Plastic does not decompose, but rather breaks down into microplastics, which cause significant damage to our soil and water health, and are readily taken up by plants, causing further ecological damage to the food web.

It is important to note that even pots made from fabric are made from polypropylene—a petroleum-based plastic. These fabric pots are made from recycled PETE 1 plastics and therefore are still plastic and their use in the ground should be avoided. Jiffy® Peat pots are not to be used as part of the program. (Please consult our green growing standard regarding peat-free potting soils for more information.)

It is clear that the very notion of distributing plastic pots through the sale of native plants actively undermines the overarching goal of this program, that is to build healthier, more sustainable landscapes.

**How this fits into the Growers' Program:** APCC requires that growers participating in the Native Plant Growers' Cooperative eliminate plastics from the pots used to package plants for sale. Germination trays, plug trays, and any additional plant potting materials that will remain on-site are allowed to be plastic, but we ask that growers select durable

options that will be suitable for re-use after the proper sterilization processes. If a grower is selling plant plugs, it is permissible to use plastic plug trays to package and sell these plugs, as we continue to look for more sustainable alternatives. However, we still request that growers ask their customers to return these trays for sterilization and re-use.

### **Plastic Alternatives to Consider**

- **CowPots** Made from cow manure -<https://cowpots.com/>
- **EcoForms** Made from rice hulls - <https://www.ecoforms.com/grower-series>
- **Fertilpot** Made from wood fiber - <https://fertilusa.com/>
- **Ecogrow** Made from recycled, non-printed paper – [Greenhouse Megastore](#)
- **Western Pulp** Made from molded fiber – [Greenhouse Megastore](#)
- **PlantBest™** Made from coconut coir – [Greenhouse Megastore](#)

### **Recommended Multi-Use Plastic Products**

- **Sunpack®** Propagation Tray – [Greenhouse Megastore](#)
- **1020** Tray Bottoms - [Greenhouse Megastore](#)
- **SureRoots** Deep 50 Cell Plug Tray – [Greenhouse Megastore](#)