

Great Gardens Begin At Root Level

The secret to beautiful gardens is found at root level—in the soil. So don't covet

your neighbour's fabulous flowers, stunning shrubs, venerable vegetables and luscious

lawns; build the foundation needed for a yard that will rival Eden.

Plant roots require soil that is loamy and neutral, with the capacity for good drainage and full of organic material. Chances are that the plot of earth that's your property doesn't possess all these characteristics.

Do a quick quality check to determine the condition of your soil. Scoop up a handful of dirt and study its texture. If it's thick and lumpy and clings together in a ball, it's heavy clay. Plant roots have a hard time penetrating clay, and they will starve due to lack of air and water.

Luckily, one soil amendment will take over where Mother Nature, or the developers, left off. Canadian sphagnum peat moss improves the texture and performance of all soils, both good and bad. It will aerate clay, bind sand, dramatically reduce the leaching of nutrients and hold up to 20 times its weight in water.

A general rule of thumb is to work a two-inch layer into the top six inches of soil. For year-round soil conditioning, add Canadian peat moss to the garden in both the spring, before planting, and in the fall, after harvesting.

Determine Soil pH And Fertilize Properly

The pH level of your garden should also be analyzed so necessary adjustments can be made. The pH, or level of alkalinity or acidity, is measured on a scale of one to 14. Seven is neutral; numbers above indicate alkaline soil and numbers below show acidic conditions. Soil amendments and fertilizers may

affect the acidity or alkalinity of your planting bed. Canadian sphagnum peat moss is again beneficial because it has a predictable pH level of 3.4 to 4.8.

A soil test will help determine accurately the pH of your soil, but there are regional clues that can also be of help. Acid soils occur throughout the Northeast and in parts of the country that have high humidity and other conditions that leach out calcium and magnesium.

Ground limestone is the antidote. For alkaline soils, spread sulfur to increase acidity. Remember—lawns, vegetables and most flowers prefer a neutral to slightly acid soil, such as pH 6.0 to 7.0.

Plants require three major nutrients: nitrogen (N), which encourages growth of plant tissues; phosphorus (P), which stimulates cell development, fruiting and disease resistance; and potassium or potash (K), which helps plants form starches and sugars as well as resist disease and drought. Fertilizers are labeled with three-number formulas, such as 5-10-10 or 10-10-10, referring to the percentage of N-P-K within the mix.

From Ancient Bogs To Gardens Everywhere

An organic product harvested from bogs 7,000 to 12,000 years old, sphagnum peat moss is found in cold, wet climates north of the 45th parallel. Canada, the Russian federation and Germany are major producers of sphagnum peat moss. Sphagnum moss was one of the first plants to grow on land as the glaciers receded at the end of the Ice Age.

Over the centuries, the

perennial sphagnum plants have grown and formed layers. As the layers decompose, they become sphagnum peat moss, an enduring, fibrous substance with large cavities that absorb air and water the way a sponge does.

Harvesting Canadian sphagnum peat moss for horticultural use is an ingenious, energy-efficient process. First, the top 1/2 inch of the peat bog is raked and left to dry in the sun. Once dry, it is picked up by large vacuum-like machines. Then it is screened to remove roots and other debris and pressed in bales.

Not All Peat Is Sphagnum

There are other types of peat moss, such as those formed from the remains of sedge and reed grasses, which are found in more temperate climates. These "peats" are more highly decomposed than Canadian sphagnum peat moss and, therefore, do not last as long. Because Canadian peat has a stronger structure than other peat products, it has a greater capacity to provide plants with the proper balance of air and water.

Composted Canadian Peat—A Rich Alternative

There is an alternative to pure Canadian peat: compost-enriched Canadian peat moss. Vegetable peelings, lawn and garden debris and coffee grounds needn't waste away in the city dump. Mixed in a 50-50 ratio with Canadian peat moss, compost makes an excellent nutrient that also improves the texture of the soil.

Peat will deodorize the compost and soak up excess moisture, which often collects in composting receptacles. Just add a shovelful or two of garden soil or stream-sterilized manure as well as two cups of limestone, and blend the ingredients.

Canadian Peat Moss—The Natural Choice

Canadian peat is not just an excellent soil conditioner; it's also a great value for the dollar. Packed in compressed bales that double in volume once opened, long-lasting Canadian peat stores and releases nutrients and moisture to roots slowly, thereby cutting down on the frequency plants need to be watered and fertilized.

At a time of increasing concern about environmental issues, it is comforting to know that this soil conditioner is a completely natural resource. A bale of Canadian sphagnum peat moss is free of insect life, weed seeds and harmful salts and chemicals. Make sure the bale contains pure sphagnum peat moss by looking for the words "Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss," the slogan "Healthier Growth, Naturally," and Canada's symbol, the maple leaf.



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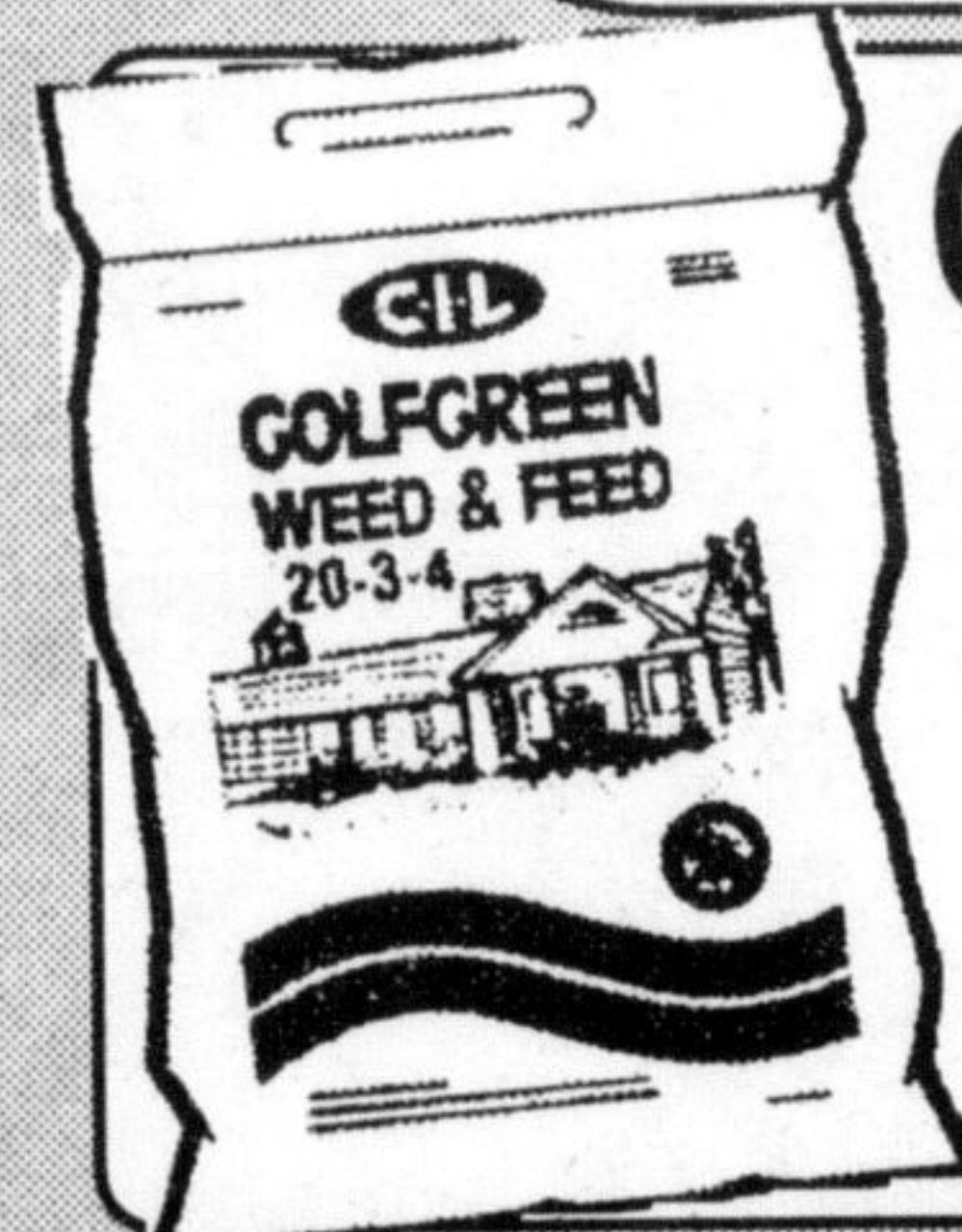
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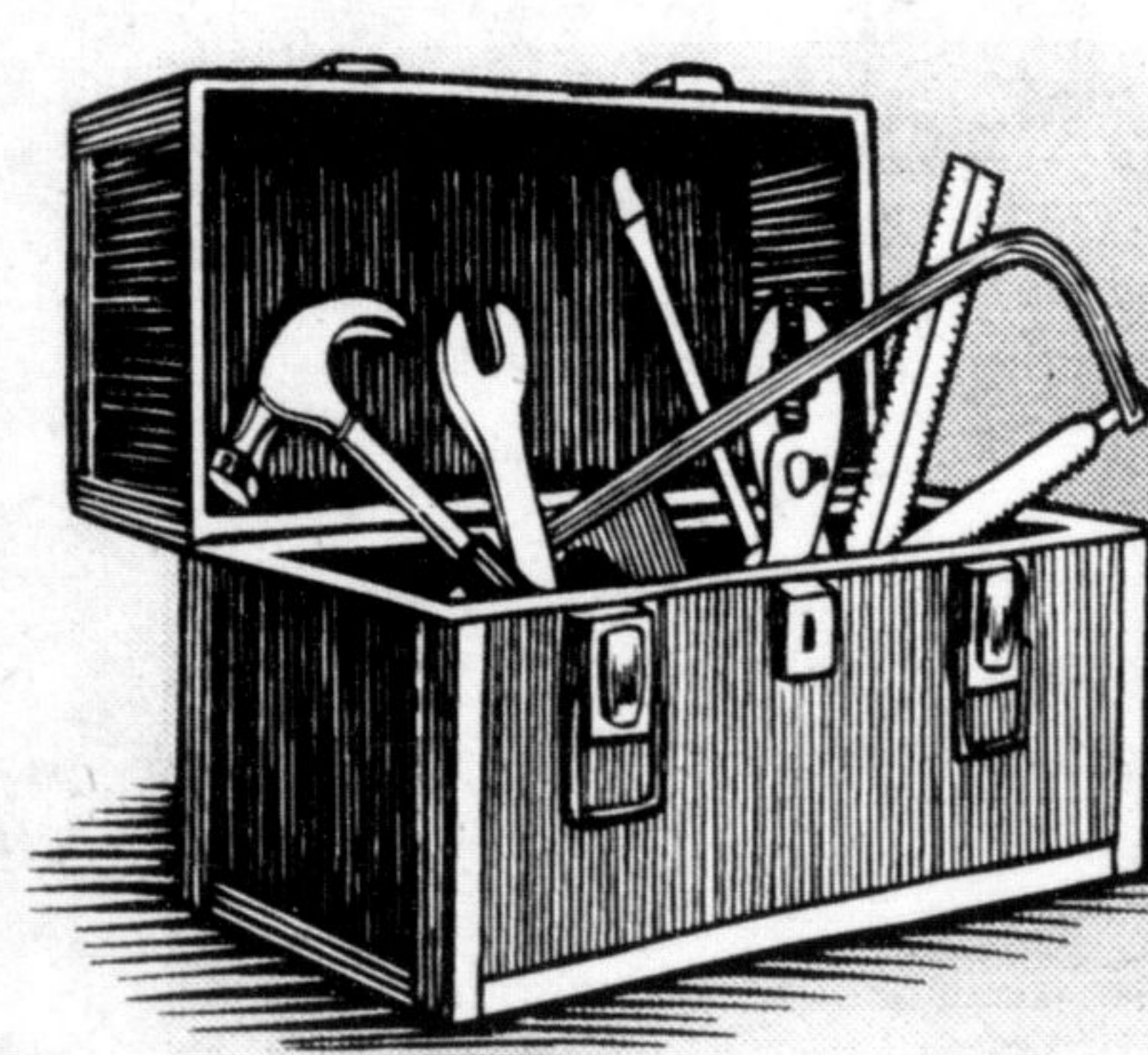
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