

HOME & GARDEN

Dishing the Dirt about Gardening Soil

By Joe Sherinski

(MS) — Now that summer is just around the corner, it's the perfect time to improve the quality of native backyard soil and help give your plants that extra boost of nutrition they need.

Unfortunately, many gardeners do not know the importance of soil conditioning, so The Scotts Company has developed two new products, along with helpful tips, to help gardeners create the perfect garden soil this season.

To start, there are significant differences between backyard soil, topsoil and garden soil. Gardeners throughout history have misused these terms and used the improper medium when planting. In clarifying their differences, Scotts and Miracle-Gro guarantee the best planting season ever.

BACKYARD SOIL

Native backyard soil tends to lose the essential vitamins and minerals that healthy plants, flowers, vegetables and lawns need to grow after years of abuse from exposure to the sun, overwatering, and compaction. In addition, water absorption, saturation and even water distribution are greatly reduced, leaving an inhospitable, barren soil for plants to live in.

TOPSOIL

Topsoil should be utilized as a base material for filling holes, and leveling lawns, gardens and beds. Topsoil improves the condition of the native soil by replenishing the organic content of the soil as well as reducing shrinkage and providing a stable environment for your gardens and lawns. Although topsoil is an essential foundation for gardens and lawns it tends to be heavy, lack porosity and water retention, and is low in nutrition. Ideally, topsoil should be used in conjunction with high-nutrient garden soils.

GARDEN SOIL

Garden soil should be used to improve and condition soils in beds and gardens. Ideally, bagged garden soil should be mixed with native backyard soil or topsoil to achieve a desired growing medium that is rich and nutritious for your plants. The high organic matter content in store-bought garden soil helps improve soil structure by making heavy clay soils more loose and porous, as well as increasing beneficial micro-organism and earthworm activity. The added nutrients give plants the quick start that is required for a beautiful garden. In addition, some premium garden soils have added a wetting agent to allow the soil to absorb and disperse water more evenly.

Miracle-Gro® Garden Soil for Flowers & Vegetables and Miracle-Gro® Garden Soil for Trees, Shrubs & Ornamentals help gardens thrive by improving the condition of outdoor soils and providing plants with essential nutrients that topsoil and backyard soil lack.

Both products are available nationwide in 1 cubic foot bags for \$3.33, and are designed to provide superior results when planting outdoor flowers, vegetable, trees and shrubs in native soils. These two unique formulas were scientifically developed to replicate the types of soil that these plants will naturally prosper in.

"We developed these products in response to consumer feedback," states Keith Baeder, Vice President of Marketing for Scotts Growing Media Division. "Our customers told us that they hated all the work that was involved in preparing soil every year. Both products are easy to use, time-saving, all-in-one soil conditioners, with the added plant food that will help make outdoor garden plants as beautiful as potted plants. Our ready-to-

use products take the guesswork out of planting while helping to alleviate the problems of moisture retention, fertilization and poor soil composition.

"Great plants grow with great soil," Baeder adds. "These products will grow plants twice as big compared to ordinary top soil, with less effort than the current practice of mixing several prod-

ucts together."

Each is made of rich, organic materials, Canadian sphagnum peat moss, manure plus just the right amount of Miracle-Gro® Plant Food, which provides essential nutrients that plants depend on for strength. Unfortunately, most soils around the country lack the proper nutrients that plants need to grow properly. "By

adding just 2 to 3 inches of Miracle-Gro® Garden Soils to a garden, Scotts guarantees that plants will grow stronger and healthier with half the effort. Even the least experienced gardener can have the garden that he or she always dreamed of without all the hassles, stress and guess work," Baeder says.

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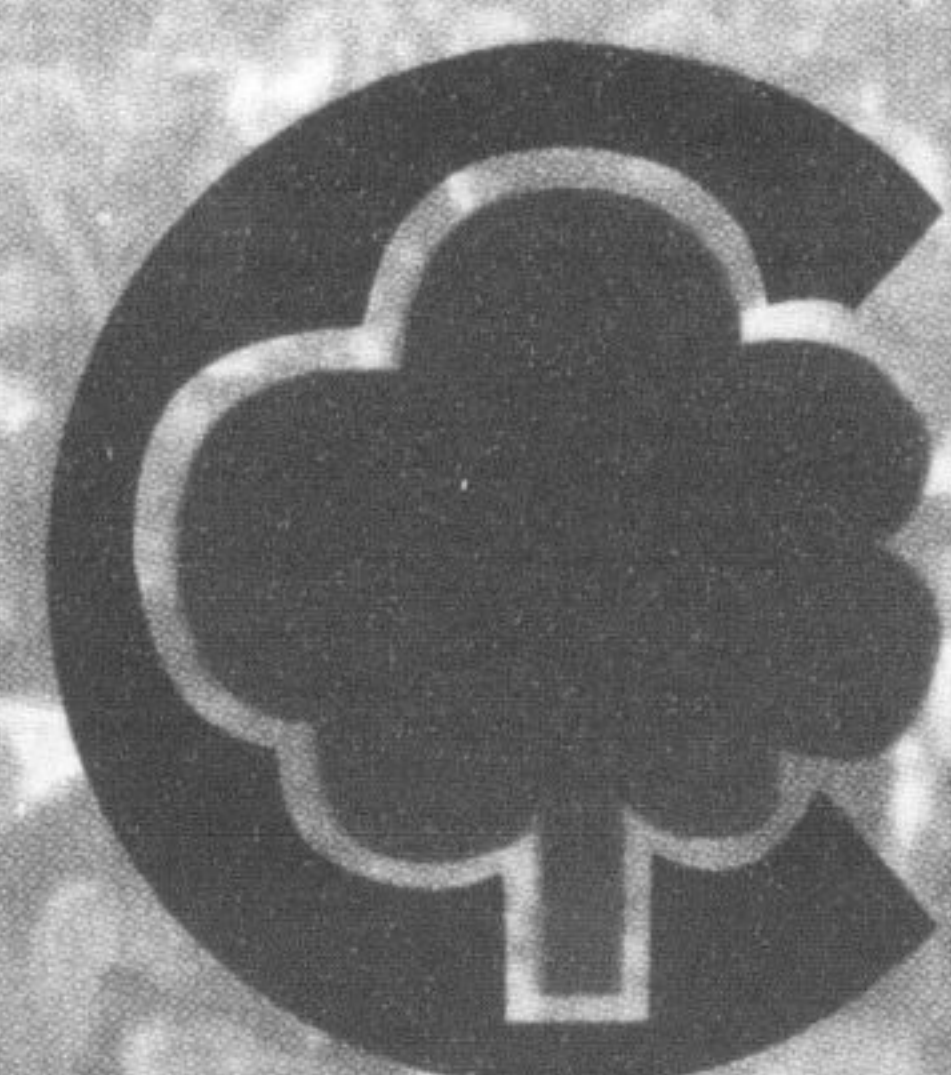
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