

Home Retail Group – Peat Policy

The use of Peat at Homebase

Since Homebase launched its Growing Media Policy in 2001 extensive trials have been conducted to identify suitable alternatives to peat. The aims of the trials identified:

- how to reduce the percentage of peat in our peat based media
- good peat free alternatives
- good peat free proprietary brands that perform as well as or better than peat based medias
- what changes were needed to improve our peat free medias

In partnership with our suppliers, new materials have been found that demonstrate our aims are now possible. Our next phase of work will be to repeat these trials to ensure we consistently achieve the same results whilst our suppliers develop ways to generate the quantity of materials in the quality that our customers require.

Our growers of ornamental plants, trees and shrubs have also been involved in reviewing a range of potential new mixes and results have been very encouraging.

Homebase Growing Media Policy

The Homebase strategy is to achieve the 90% peat free by 2010 by

- Reduce the use of peat in retail bags and plant products wherever possible by using acceptable alternatives and wherever peat is used to minimise the volume.
- Actively investigate and develop alternatives that achieve the quality results required.
- Offer choice to the customer by providing alternatives wherever practical and identify and promote the alternative to the customer so that they can make an informed choice.
- Where peat is used, source it responsibly, so that any extraction minimises damage to the environment or habitat
- Ensure that it is not sourced from designated areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), (SAC's) or the Northern Ireland and Eire equivalent (ASSI's) and Scotland (SSI's) or any national equivalent.
- Encourage suppliers to comply with best practice and to have habitat rehabilitation plans post-extraction.
- All plant suppliers to develop a growing media policy where targets are identified and action plans are developed to meet proposed targets.

How Homebase will achieve these targets.

There are currently no alternatives available to fully replace peat, which provide the uniformity, performance and quality our customers have come to rely upon at Homebase.

There are however, many peat free alternatives that can be blended with current products not only reducing the volume of peat used but also improving the quality and performance of the overall growing media for our customers. We recognise that these alternatives require different management practices to peat and these changes will therefore need to be clearly communicated to our customers. Clearly labelling peat free and peat-reduced lines will enable our customers to make more informed decisions.

Major work needs to be carried out, both in-house with our suppliers, but also in conjunction with the growing media industry, consultants and Government. Information gained should be used for the benefit of all members of the industry to provide a sustainable programme for the reduction of peat use within the industry over the next decade.

Our plant suppliers will be encouraged to have a growing media policy and demonstrate reductions in their use of peat through an initial reduction strategy. Homebase has always played an active part within the horticultural industry and proposes the following targets for the reduction of the use of peat within the business

Proposed Targets

End of 2006 (and each year until 2009)

A further 10% by volume reduction in the use of peat.

End of 2009

To ensure that by the end of 2009, 90% (by volume) of the growing media and soil conditioners sold by Homebase are peat free. Following the Homebase Peat Tracker 3, we will issue a report showing the successes made and we will review and issue where appropriate, future targets based on these findings.