

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



plants materials in poorly drained or boggy areas.

Although costly, sphagnum moss is the most desirable component for a growing media. Sphagnum moss is particularly light in weight and has the ability to adsorb 10 to 20 times its weight in water.

Bark is primarily a by-product of the pulp, paper and plywood industries. The bark is ground up by hammer milling, screening and composting. This produces a material which is suitable for use in container media and decomposes faster than peat. Physical properties obtained from tree bark are similar to those of Sphagnum, moss.

Sand is a valuable amendment for both potting and propagation media. Sand, a basic component of many field soils range in particle size from 0.05mm to 2.0mm in diameter. Sand improves the physical properties of a growing media. Medium and coarse sand particles are preferred in soilless media. Although sand is generally inexpensive, it is also the heaviest.

Perlite is a silicious mineral of volcanic origin. Crushed and heated to make a horticultural

grade, perlite becomes a light powdery substance. Lightness and uniformity make perlite a very effective component of media for poinsettias.

Perlite is very dusty when dry. Perlite has a tendency to float to the soil surface of a container during watering.

Vermiculite is a micacious mineral heated to make an expanded plate-like particle to aid in holding water and improve aeration and drainage. Vermiculite has the ability to supply plant nutrients including potassium and magnesium.

Although the mix of amendments used by the greenhouse growers vary, all growing medias must be porous and well-drained, hold water, relatively low in soluble salts, and are

mixed to make a uniform batch of soil

Some amendment combinations are made by mixing different ratios (by volume) of soilless ingredients. Some commonly used soilless mixtures for poinsettias include 2:1 peat to perlite; 2:1:1 peat to perlite to vermiculite; 2:1 peat to sand; 3:1 peat to sand; 3:1:1; peat to perlite to vermiculite; 2:1:1 peat to bark to sand; 2:1:1 peat to bark to perlite or 3:1:1 peat to bark to sand. Many small growers purchase commercial mixes rather than mix their own for raising poinsettias.

Any questions can be directed to Thomas S. Becker, Horticultural Agent, Penn State Cooperative Extension, York County (717) 840-7408 or Email at Yorkmg@psu.edu.

Poinsettia Soil Basics

Plants grown in a media that is very porous dries out too quickly. Plants grown in a heavier media become stressed from low oxygen and root diseases.

Growing media used for poinsettias has to be free of disease organisms, insects and weeds. Field soils are never 'pest' free. Poinsettia in soilless media containing no field soils use several common amendments including peat, bark, perlite and vermiculite.

Peat and Peat-like materials used in soilless media include peat moss, hypnaceous moss, reed and sedge, humus or muck and sphagnum moss. Peat moss is formed by the accumulation of

The ever popular poinsettia is back. A holiday favorite for many adults, the colorful bracts of the poinsettias last longer if grown in a good soilless media.

Select a quality poinsettia that was grown using a combination of peat moss, perlite, bark, vermiculite or other organic materials. Regardless of what the media is contained the soilless media designed for potted poinsettias has to be porous. The media must also hold a sufficient amount of water and nutrients to prevent daily watering and fertilizing when you get it home.

**Tree Festival
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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) - Visit the third annual festival of Trees for inspiration for the holidays. On Saturdays and Sundays from November 28 through December 13 decorated Christmas trees will be on display in the Tavern House at Fort Hunter from noon to 8 p.m. on Saturdays and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Admission is free.

Co-sponsored by the Harrisburg Area Civic Garden Center and Fort Hunter, Christmas trees with tasteful, creative and unique decorations will be displayed for viewing just in time for holiday decorating.

Seven trees, decorated with handmade ornaments by different member garden clubs, will be displayed and available for raffle.

Visitors will enjoy such theme trees as needlework, angelic, Victorian and others. Ornaments will be available for purchase. While at Fort Hunter be sure to visit Fort Hunter Mansion decorated for the holidays, the Museum Shop stocked with unique gift giving ideas, the Toy Train exhibit, Crafts Reunion on December 5 & 6 and The Victorian Tea on December 6. For more information call 599-5751.

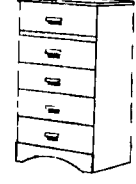
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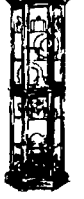


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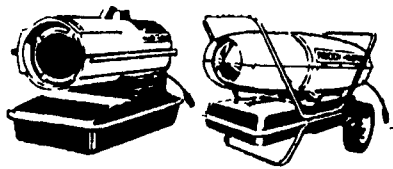
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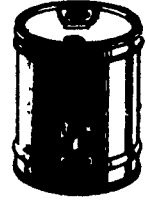


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