

All About Potting Mixes

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 Certification Assistant
 Farmers everywhere are starting or have already started their produce, herbs, and flower seeds for the season, and we've been getting numerous calls about what potting mixes are acceptable.

Potting mixes must be composed entirely of allowed and non-synthetic materials and must not contain synthetic wetting agents, unless they are Omri-listed. Remember, just because it says organic on the label does not mean it is allowed. Look for the Omri logo.

As a certified organic grower, there are three options for obtaining acceptable potting mixes.

1. Purchasing Omri — listed transplant medias.
2. Mixing your own.
3. Using a commercial product reviewed by PCO.

Make sure you have your mixes available well before the time you anticipate using them, so that your planting will not be delayed if a suitable mix cannot be found, or its compliance determined. Plan ahead.

1. The following Potting Mixes/Transplant Medias are

Omri-listed:

- GrowPro by Green Technology Group (www.greentg.com 703-832-0497)

- Sunshine Organic by Sun Gro Horticulture (www.sungro.com 425-373-3614) include: Sunshine Organic Premix, Aggregate, Basic, Complete, Germination, Planting Mix and Plug, Organic PX-2 and Pre-Mix, Black Gold Coco Blend.

- Millenium Soils Coir by Vgrove, Inc. (905-687-1877 Canada).

- Peaco All Natural Organic Potting Soil, by Peaco Peat Moss and Soils (800-829-0729).

Omri listed wetting agents (present in many potting mixes):

- Therm X-15M (Cellu-Con 559-568-0190)

- Therm X-70 (Cellu-Con 559-568-0190)

- JH Biotech Natural Wet from JH Biotech, Inc. (1-800-428-3493)

- RainGrow Superflow from Bioz Agri Products, Inc. (1-877-232-7651).

To find a current listing of Omri-approved brand name products, go to www.omri.org.

2. You can mix your own. These are some general

mixes based on the Organic Potting Mixes fact sheet from ATTRA. You may want to adapt these to your specific needs:

Recipes:

- Seed Starting Mix
- 2 parts sifted compost
- 4 parts peat moss
- 2 parts perlite
- 4 oz. limestone
- Seedling Mix
- 1 part perlite
- 1 part peat moss
- 1 part compost
- 1 part rock phosphate

1 part worm castings (optional)

The Organic Potting Mixes fact sheet is available by calling ATTRA: 800-346-9140 or visiting www.attra.org.

3. Having PCO review a commercial mix to determine compliance with the NOP.

Most commercial mixes contain prohibited materials in the form of wetting agents, synthetic starter fertilizers and occasional biocontrol agents. If you cannot find an already Omri-approved mix,

request PCO to review a specific mix for you. Remember that the review process may be rather intensive, and results may not be available as quickly as you'd like, depending on the ingredients and the research involved.

PCO has reviewed and approved:

BC 10 Bio-Compost 10 Summer Ag Professional Growing Mix by Bio-Comp, Inc. (800-624-4769).

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Report On First Wine Maker Tech Meeting

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — On Wednesday, April 24, 21 wine makers met at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster for the purpose of creating a "wine tech group."

Traveling the furthest were Mike Metil (Michael Charles Winery) and Mike McVicker (Glade Pike Winery), who will be starting a similar group in the southwestern part of the state.

The importance of this kind of a group was brought into focus when Don Chapman, Pennsylvania Wine As-

sociation (PWA) president, reported that a state enologist should be in place in the next year or so. With the state being as large as it is, the "wine tech group" may provide a basic platform for that person to work from. The bottom line of our group is "wine makers helping wine makers."

The afternoon's format allowed for candid exchange about wines submitted for group evaluation. The topics discussed were many: bottling (sanitary vs. sterile),

SO2 determination (titrets vs ripper vs A/O), acid reduction, filtering, cold stabilization, potassium, use of sorbate, Pennsylvania oak barrels, stem addition, oxidation and MLF.

Other wines were brought just to be tasted and commented on. Conversation was lively, constructive, candid and informal. A great spirit of camaraderie permeated the room.

The time went fast as the information flowed. Information exchanged was valuable to the novice as well as experienced wine makers.

The next meeting will be June 19 at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster from 2 p.m.- 5 p.m. (one hour was added by request). Bring your wines — problems and trophies, and questions to share with the group.



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