



BEST USE PRACTICES FOR 'AGED' GROWING MEDIA

There are three components of growing media that change as the product ages. These aging characteristics are typical of all peat and bark-based growing media and are most noticeable when the product is more than 10 months old:

1. Wetting Agent: Microorganisms in peat and bark act on the wetting agent to biodegrade it and growers may experience difficulty wetting soilless growing medium. A typical symptom is “ponding” of water on the media surface and slower water infiltration. This can also create dry and wet pockets of growing medium within cells and pots, which can lead to uneven drying and inconsistent crop growth.

***Solution:** Apply a wetting agent, such as Aqua-Gro L at the rate of 600 ppm for transplant mixes or 300 ppm for germination mixes.*

2. Starter Fertilizer Charge: The starter fertilizer charge is slowly consumed by naturally-occurring microorganisms found in peat moss and bark. Of the fertilizer elements added, nitrate and iron are consumed most rapidly. At 10 months after manufacturing, these two nutrients are nearly gone, with all other nutrients also declining.

***Solution:** For germination mixes, apply a 50 ppm nitrogen fertilizer solution after germination. For general transplant mixes, apply a 100 ppm nitrogen fertilizer solution at the time of planting.*

3. Limestone: Calcitic and dolomitic limestone are used to adjust the initial pH of growing media to 5.4.-5.8 after watering in. If water seeps into the package or if the product is more than a year old, limestone is activated and the pH will climb, but generally does not exceed 6.5 for PRO-MIX products.

***Solution:** Use the older product for crops that prefer higher pH (ie: marigold, New Guinea Impatiens and geranium). For other crops, apply potentially acidic fertilizers, such as 20-10-20 at initial watering.*

What is the manufacturing date of my PRO-MIX?: For bales, the manufacturing date is located on the side panel bar that is 18” long and 3” high. For loose-fill bags, this bar is found on the front, bottom panel of the bag. Within the bar is a black, ink-jet printed code that indicates the production date, as such: **11/05/19 113 13:00**. The beginning of the code is the date represented by year/month/day. In this example, the product was produced on May 19, 2011.

Proper Storage of PRO-MIX: The “aging” process of any soilless mix is accelerated with heat. Store PRO-MIX in cool areas out of direct sun. Cover with heavy plastic to avoid sun damage, rain from getting into the bags and to keep out weed seed.

To assure the best performance from PRO-MIX products, always use fresh product, pay attention to manufacturing date and practice ‘first in, first out’ stock rotation. Plan your usage accordingly to prevent product carryover from season to season.

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