



PERLITE



Perlite is a naturally occurring volcanic rock which is heat to a high temperature to form an expanded light weight micro porous structure with a high surface area. It absorbs and retains vast amounts of air and moisture, improves aeration and drainage and is stable and long lasting. It is ideal for use when sowing seeds, rooting cuttings, potting on and container growing to improve aeration, moisture retention and drainage. It is inert, sterile and has neutral pH

Root Cuttings

For soft stem and leaf cuttings use a mixture of equal parts compost and perlite. For harder cuttings and for fragile plants, increase to two parts perlite to one part compost. Keep well watered but ensure free drainage. Plants should be feed as soon as roots develop. Once roots have developed, pot on in the normal way either into compost or a compost/perlite mix. The addition of perlite accelerates rooting and reduces the risk of damping off (fungal disease). It provides an optimum balance of air and water, making water logging almost impossible and minimising damage to roots when transplanting.

Potting On

Fill the container/trough with compost and add 25% perlite by volume, to the compost allowing sufficient space to accommodate plant roots. Perlite can be used wholly or partly in place of sand and/or grit to create a light and open structure, improving aeration, drainage and insulation. Before transferring plants from plant pots to containers it is recommended to water the plants well and allow to drain. Remove plants from their plant pots and place into the container firming compost around the plant roots. Once the container/trough is fully planted, water well and feed as appropriate.

VERMICULITE

Vermiculite is a naturally occurring mineral based on Micra, heated to a high temperature to form a light weight sterile material with an open honeycomb structure of high porosity and high absorbency. In composts it improves aeration and drainage whilst also absorbing nutrients which prevents them from being washed out and then releases them to the plant roots. Widely used in propagation as a seed cover where it insulates against fluctuations in surface temperature when used.





Seed Sowing

Vermiculite is ideal for the germination of seeds, because its aeration properties combined with its water holding capacity make it a very suitable medium for direct contact with the seeds.

Seeds of all sizes can be raised in just vermiculite. Alternatively, seeds can be germinated using an equal mix of compost and vermiculite (50/50). This is most beneficial for very small seeds. Sow the seeds thinly and evenly, making sure that they are not too deep in the compost. Cover seed trays with a light layer of vermiculite and moisten, avoiding over firming.

Pricking Out

Plant the seedlings in a mix of compost and 25/30% vermiculite by volume. Water regularly to prevent compost drying out until the seedlings are ready to be potted on. The addition of vermiculite will facilitate nutrients to be absorbed and then released slowly to the plant's root hairs. This is especially beneficial when applying liquid plant foods.

Rooting/Cuttings

Vermiculite/ peat composts stimulate root growth, giving quicker anchorage of the plant and uptake of nutrients. A 50/50 mix is generally suitable for cuttings on the open bench or under plastic covers, but a maximum of 25% is recommended under mist irrigation in summer. Thoroughly water the vermiculite before inserting cuttings, and do not compress around the base of the cutting.

Potting On

Vermiculite in potting compost gives a very light open compost, holding more water and facilitating re-wetting, thereby lengthening the time between watering. Vermiculite also has excellent ion exchange properties which absorb excess nutrients and release them slowly to the plants via the finest root hairs.

A 50/50 mix of vermiculite and peat is widely used for greenhouse pot plants and hanging baskets, while a 25/75 mix is generally suitable for bedding plants. To improve existing compost add 20-25% by volume of Vermiculite and mix thoroughly.

