



Custom Mix Compost - July 2022

Back to the keyboard

With the recent sale of Lyndale Nurseries and the transfer to Waimea Group complete, I have found that I miss my previous monthly ramble of facts and fiction we put out there as Lyndale Newsbrief.

Hence "**Custom Mix Compost**" the blog is alive and well, and will feature as a bi-monthly endeavour to find topical and informative stuff to talk about.

People have asked "What about plants? Won't you miss them? The answer is no, as they have not gone away. They are very much topics of daily interest as KiwiFlora, our company that represents plant breeders and their plant inventions in overseas markets, also looks at importing new plant material for and into the NZ market.

With the cost of biosecurity compliance growing and the range of material able to be imported shrinking, it is a constant juggling act dealing with the ever-changing rules and regulations that make up the world of importing and exporting of live plant material.

Potting mix built to good consistent formulation that brings all that plants need to support quality growth when they need it, remains key to successful commercial growing and goes hand in hand with understanding plant growth and the associated nutritional requirements.



Have shovel, have a job

The truth of my introduction to the world of commercial horticulture came initially at the end of a shovel, when it was strongly suggested to me as a 13-year-old by my mother and father that I needed to get an after school/school holiday job.

The driving motive for me being a new sail which I was so sure was vital to my chances of winning any yacht race.

So I ended up happily working for Noelyn Parr and Lyndale Nurseries, often on the end of a shovel making up the 4 or 8 cubes of potting mix that was required, always ASAP.

I also found out it took more than a new sail to win a yacht race, but it sure helped.

The shovel was needed to throw the required volume through the shredder machine which was a flail-based gizmo that produced a mixed-up brew from the pre-layered ingredients of peat, bark, pumice and fertilizer when they were shovelled through the very noisy shredder.

The success of the blending operation was very much at the mercy of the operators of the shovels, as lifting a full shovel through all the layers of raw ingredients was key. This was not left to the schoolboy, but he was often paired with an experienced hand who set the pace such that sweat poured off all involved.

When the nursery invested in its first soil mixing ribbon blender, there were sighs of relief all around from us the guys and girls on the shovels, and I suspect the plants, as consistent and well-blended mixes became the norm with operator error eliminated through rigorous procedures and that wonderful ribbon blender.

We still follow the same principles today at Lyndale Custom Mix that were established some 40 years ago with that first 0.5 meter ribbon blender mixer and a 135 Massey Ferguson tractor with a 0.25 meter bucket.

The addition of some further education (sort of) gave me a better appreciation of what we were actually creating when we made potting mixes based on UC (University of California) principles of growing in artificial media.



Custom Mix provides an alternative for this

Plus an understanding of the importance of the secret ingredient that is essential for plant growth.

Air or air space as measured by the AFC (Air Filled Capacity) of a potting mix is key.

Back to the Future

Now halfway through 2022, supplies of raw inputs for making potting mixes, and it would seem a whole range of other products, has improved, but only just. Logistical supply lines have stabilized and we are all coping with the new norms of stretched supply lines and infrequent shipping timetables.

However, it is the ever-increasing cost of everything that we are all struggling to cope with.

Transport is key to the manufacturing and supply of almost anything in NZ.

Hence the upward spiral of costs driven by unfettered fuel charges can only produce one outcome, rapid cost increases and associated inflation.

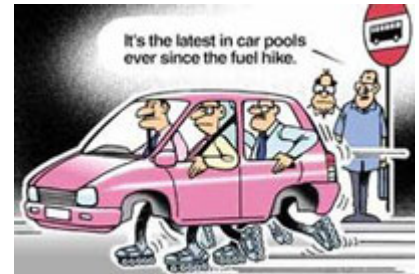
Potting Mixes are no exception with every month bringing us a new round of increasing price adjustments.

As the Plant Producing industry, it is true that we need to be pushing for efficiencies in production (more mechanization) but also not let ourselves be trapped into the supermarket scenario, where the retailers dictate the terms of trade to such an extent that growers often end up absorbing the rising tide of price movement at their own peril.

That's all for now folks!

Kind regards

THE CUSTOM MIX TEAM



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