



Custom Compost - January 2024

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New Beginnings

A new year, new government, new hope?

The ornamental retail plant scene has certainly picked itself up and boogied with this last month of fine weather.

I am talking specifically of Auckland where fine weather has been a rarity for eighteen months.

The rest of New Zealand especially the South Island has seen consistently good retail results, so it is reassuring to have Auckland start to see some positive sales pull through after a touch of sunshine.

Our garden at home has never looked so good after the big wet earlier this year and great spring temperatures, growth has been phenomenal.

Plants that we have always struggled with (due to our philosophy of minimal water) such as Hydrangea are looking a million dollars this year.

The Gardenia Crown Jewels is another case in point. While it always looks a picture right on cue for Christmas, this year, it has achieved



Gardenia 'Crown Jewel'

significant growth prior to flowering and well, just looks fantastically healthy.

Mulch is the key. How to retain moisture? How to suppress weed growth? How to add beneficial soil microorganisms? How to improve soil quality? How to sequester carbon back into the soil?

All these questions and more are answered in one word, MULCH.

I have to admit to being slow to appreciate very many benefits of mulch but like an ex-smoker there is no advocate stronger than a recent convert to the new norm.



Mulch

Not so new but also transformative

Ash or as his mother named him Ashley Walker, first joined Lyndale Custom Mix when filling in time waiting for an intake opening in his then chosen career in the RNZAF.

Something clicked in the interim and after a couple of starts Ash became a star in the Custom Mix team.

Ash has now shouldered the very real responsibilities of being our Operations Manager, a role that was surely tested with the financial and emotional turmoil we experienced earlier this year (refer December Edition Custom Compost).



Ash Walker - Operations Manager

Ash has come through that difficult time with flying colours and brought us much needed stability, good humour, and just plain good natured fun to our dedicated team of ex horticulturalist, potting mix manufacturers.

You are likely going to meet Ash should he swing by your Nursery to deliver your potting mix order.

Say hi and feel free to ask him any questions you may have about your mix.

Ash has learnt very quickly that every one of our customers has a different story to tell which is as unique and fascinating as the mix of plants that you grow.

Ahead in 2024

The benefit of incorporating a small proportion of peat in your potting mix has been trumpeted often in this blog. With the real possibility of a dry summer/autumn in 2024 the benefit that even a small percentage of peat contributes in terms of its consistent ability to retain nutrients and moisture in a potting mix blend is well documented and will become even more visible to the naked eye.



Custom Mix is in the unique position amongst potting mix suppliers of enjoying access to peat supplies from our two chosen New Zealand sources, and multiple offshore sources (for those few, Plant Producers that require a different grade or physical characteristic to that which NZ sourced peat offers). With our wet summer of 2022/23 a not so distant memory, the peat harvest this year in NZ is shaping up to be a vintage year (can peat harvesting have vintage years?).



Peat

With the reliability well returned to international shipping, supplies of Coco peat from our trusted source and perlite are only three months

away from delivery, while we were lucky enough to never quite run out of both of these useful ingredients, over the dreaded COVID years, we are pleased to report that our stocks are replenished and we do not foresee any supply issues.

A pleasant position to be in at the start of 2024.

Essen Looms

The end of January marks the time that you have to get on a plane for a thirty hour trip to Essen Germany, if you are to attend the Essen IPM show.

The Essen show remains the horticultural premier showcase for the year ahead. If you want to see and touch the latest in technological innovation in machinery, systems, plants, irrigation or anything else you can think of, this eye watering show is the place to be.

It is just such a pity that we in the antipodes have to drag ourselves away from our summer, to experience the grey and often snow that is a German winter in Essen.

For Custom Mix and KiwiFlora this showcase is not to be missed, so come the end of January, Essen beckons. One of the innovations I am keen to follow up the latest progress on is the developments in organic fertilizers.

Due to our strict biosecurity regulations, animal derived fertilizers are near to impossible to import. Which is why we lag so far behind in this area along with the latest developments in chemicals. We are still stuck with chemicals most of the world has banned. But its not all bad!!!!

Looking forward to seeing what the latest possibilities are.

Wishing you all a fantastic 2024.

Kind regards
The Custom Mix Team

