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## Lyndale Custom Compost - February 2024

### 2024 Starts with a Flurry

The combination of warm dry weather and just enough occasional rain to keep everything green in most of the north has resulted in a flurry of activity.

For Custom Mix.

Nurseries specializing in revegetation are the first to awake from the hibernation strategy that most nurseries now adopt over the Christmas/New Year period, as they along with most businesses want to use up as many of the outstanding holidays owed to staff as possible, before getting back into the full scale production/sales mode that is normal operating procedure.

Revegetation Nurseries typically need to have all their production completed in January and in some cases into February, if they are to have grown plants of an acceptable size to make the grade for their customers planting out season.

Planting usually starts around June, or after the level of ground moisture has risen enough to support new planting but not so much that it is difficult to efficiently plant due to a high water table and constant rain (as seen in 2023 in the greater Auckland region and beyond).

While the vagaries of the weather have a major impact on the planting out of crops grown for



Trim T28's ready to plant

revegetation, this area of specialization has been a pathway to success for many nurseries today.

Grown rapidly, in many cases from quite humble beginnings, the revegetation sector has grasped and benefited from the tools of mechanization available to the nursery industry and has seen some entities grow into some of the largest nurseries in the country.

Potting mix requirements for typical revegetation lines are designed to not create excessive nitrogen driven soft growth, instead a plant that reaches size quickly with time to harden up before being exposed to the rigours of being planted out in often a bare field.



Reveg plus pest control

## Retail Tide Turns

It would appear to an outside observer that we are in the process of seeing a swing in momentum, as the stance of retailers of green garden goods moves from one of mass indenting to ensure enough stock, to a behaviour more reminiscent of a decade ago.

This pattern sees the major garden retailers indent a small proportion of what is sold, relying on the overproduction of wholesale nurseries to ensure that they can purchase stock on an as required basis.

However, a branch buyer faced with an emailed list of botanical names on a typical stock availability list will be a lot less inclined to order for a range of reasons, not the least of which



being that they often do not have the knowledge base to understand what they are looking at.

In response I would expect to see the return of the sales vans, with sales staff visiting retail garden outlets to show product and take orders.

The “show product and take an order” process, is suddenly becoming relevant again as the level of knowledge in the industry declines, combined with the sudden drop in indented product levels from the big boxes and independents alike.

Hence, my prediction of the return of the sales van (Electric? Certainly hybrid).



No AI in sight ...as yet.

## Back on Plants

The ILVO, better known as the Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, have partnered with Herplant BV a significant nursery in Belgium specializing in Buxus and Taxus selections to breed solutions to counter the devastating effect that *Calonectria pseudonaviculata* (Buxus Blight) has wrought on the ageless Buxus topiary and formal hedges around both the old-world and the new.

They have utilized little known species, going back to wild source to create hybrids that are able to effectively counter the blight.

Guess where the only country in the world is who cannot import them all?

Got it first go, NZ with its restrictive view of the world of plants that has effectively turned us in two decades from a haven of plant breeding excellence to a stagnating backwater of plant importing mediocrity.



In fairness, we are allowed to import one of the four available hybrids (due to its hybrid parents being on the PBI, Plant Biosecurity Index).

However, the four selections have distinct growth characteristics to fill different roles in the world of topiary and formal hedges.

The point remains that our over cautious approach to plant imports has long term consequences for future generations of New Zealanders, who will be left with chemical only solutions to pests and disease that can and are (elsewhere) effectively being combated via breeding of superior genotypes capable of withstanding plagues and pestilence.



Blight free varieties brings confidence

Watch this space.

Kind regards

**The Custom Mix Team**



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