

Flourish!

News from Fertile Fibre | Summer 2007



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Change creeps up on us: a few decades ago, using peat to condition soil was seen as being nothing but a good thing. But now, with much greater environmental concern to the fore, the despoliation of the peat moors and the destruction of habitats is a major issue. Hence the pressure to find satisfactory alternatives continues.

Nowdays environmentally aware gardeners refuse to use peat—but choosing an alternative is not as straightforward as you might think, and available 'peat free' composts are far from equal.

Better than peat?

The organic alternative

If you've tried a peat-free compost and not been happy with the results, then you have not tried Fertile Fibre! Other 'peat free' products may even include composted green waste—and who knows what's in that at any given time!—but Fertile Fibre's high quality is completely consistent.

Fertile Fibre delivers superior results—and importantly—is organically accredited.

Horticulturalists who've made the switch to Fertile Fibre confirm—its growing qualities are outstanding.

The difference

In fact peat is not ideal for many of the uses it's put to! It is a poor mulch, dries out quickly, and is easily blown away.

You will notice the difference using Fertile Fibre—it re-wets easily, has good water retention qualities, does not blow away in the wind, and is particularly pleasant to handle.

Fertile Fibre's no-compromise coir

You thought that coir is coir is coir? Not so, according to Fertile Fibre's Matt Dent: 'Professional users of our products agree that the dependable consistency of our growing medium—or composts as they are more usually known—from bag to bag, year to year, is the key to its success.

'We set ourselves a high quality standard: I personally visit the growers in Sri Lanka to inspect the raw material for myself, and negotiate to buy only the best. I reject much of what is on offer: coir is a by-product, and if it has been produced by a factory near the sea, salt water will have been used to soak it. This second rate coir is never used for Fertile Fibre.



Matt Dent: 'High quality standards...'

'Also, some coir is sterilised with methyl bromide. This powerful sterilizing chemical is used as a soil fumigant and to control the pests which attack the coconut trees. It also depletes the ozone layer, so is completely unacceptable for our organic product.'

Read more about the coir story inside



Website a success

BE SURE TO TAKE A LOOK at Fertile Fibre's website: 'When we created an online shop, we didn't realise how popular it would be' says Fertile Fibre's Matt Dent:

'Now, with www.fertilefibre.com you can enjoy shopping 24/7.

'It's good news, because if your passion is gardening, you don't want to be restricted to shop hours when you're planning your requirements.

'And many of our customers tell us that our home delivery service really takes the pain away from lugging heavy sacks from a garden centre.

'Our website packed with information and helpful links, with a particular emphasis on organic matters.'

Be sure to visit the site regularly to check out the new products: the latest addition is the Maxicrop range of organically certified products, which complement the main Fertile Fibre range beautifully.

If you'd rather deal with Fertile Fibre by phone, call on 01432 853111. Matt says: 'We all greatly enjoy talking to our customers, and hope you'll continue to call us. One thing that you won't find when you call is a recorded voice saying 'Press 1 for sales...'

Making compost to your own recipe is easy with Fertile Fibre



Take a coir block. Add water, wait a day...



...and you get 9 litres of fibre. Fabulous flowers, vivacious vegetables!

Why risk using anything else?

THE SATISFACTION OF SEEING plants grow and prosper is the gardener's real satisfaction. And with Fertile Fibre, you can be confident that you are giving them the very best start.

Your positive organic choice is Fertile Fibre, which has built a huge reputation and a loyal following over its 15 year history. It was the growing medium for gold-medal winning Birmingham City Council floral display at Chelsea Flower Show in 2000.



Coir story

Fertile Fibre is a fantastic organic product proving its worth with growers. But what exactly is it?



FERTILE FIBRE IS horticulture's real alternative to using peat. Its foundation is coir—otherwise known as coconut fibre.

It starts, obviously, with the coconut tree, and what a productive plant this is.

Harvested, coconuts look much bigger than the coconuts we see in our shops. This is thanks to a thick outer casing: this outer husk is removed, and the coconuts either sent for sale whole, or go to be processed into desiccated coconut or coconut oil, while the shell is ground up for use as fertilizer.

The husks follow a different route: they are soaked in water to soften, and then put into a carding machine to remove the coir fibre that's used to make rope, string, and coconut matting.

During the carding process, dust and small fibres fall beneath the machines—and for Fertile Fibre this is the interesting part.

Once this was just dumped as waste, but it now it is collected, dried, and compressed into blocks. And the best is bought by Fertile Fibre.



Purely organic, environmentally friendly

Fertile Fibre apply stringent quality control procedures to the coir that they import to ensure that it does not contain contaminants such as salt or sterilizing chemicals.

The coir comes only from organically-grown coconut trees: Certification of this organic produce is done by international agencies accredited to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

Fertile Fibre products are certified by the Soil Association, the UK's leading campaigning and certification organisation for organic food and farming.

Bulk raw material is efficiently transported to the UK

by sea in 40 foot containers. This ensures minimal environmental impact, with no 'air miles' consideration.

Quality and consistency

On arrival at the Fertile Fibre company's Herefordshire farm headquarters, raw materials are first checked for quality, then to be processed, blended and packed for transit. This gives the firm complete control over its products' organic integrity.

First the compressed coir is soaked in cold water—this is energy-efficient, and ensures that the structure and consistency is not affected.

Products are carefully formulated to ensure that organic nutrients are released gradually, and in the low concentrations that reduce the need for top-up feeding.

Nutrients are blended-in to produce composts that are completely organic and Soil Association approved. These are finely ground to ensure dispersion throughout the coir base.



Authentically organic all the way

Fertile Fibre claims that its coir products are unrivalled for quality and successful cultivation outcomes. For the gardener and horticulturalist, this translates into plant growth of award-winning quality.

And there's a bonus in the knowledge that the chain of organic verity leads all the way from the coconut tree to your own plants.



New—coir pots

No more ugly plastic clutter

MADE FROM COIR with latex and formed in a warm mould for lasting strength, these are fast becoming the leader in biodegradable pots.

Used for direct planting, this new product biodegrades in the soil in three months, so there's no need to remove plants from the pot before planting out.

What's more they look very decorative around the house, and last around nine months when plants are directly planted into the pot. However if you use them just to hide an ugly plastic plant pot, they'll last a lot longer.

And some devotees of things organic tell us that they make handy storage for pens and pencils on a desk-top. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder...



Just some of our range of Coir Pots... check our website and online shop for the full range



Going for gold!

FERTILE FIBRE HAS BUILT a huge reputation and a loyal following over its 16 year history.

Not least amongst professional horticulturalists, who require really effective organic growing media to achieve really great results.

Fertile Fibre has underpinned many award winning entries, ranging from the gold-medal winning Birmingham City Council floral display at Chelsea Flower Show in 2000, and the Cottage Herbery's Chelsea Gold Medal in 2006. And not forgetting the honours gained at many other shows.

So it's good to know that, with Fertile Fibre, you're working with the very best—the gold standard.

What's new?

The Fertile Fibre range of composts is now extended with specialist mixes:

Potting Plus Compost for customers preparing plants for sale.

Organic Tree and Shrub Potting Compost will rejuvenate tired-looking plants for a long growing season, help keep the plant stable in windy conditions.

Winter Seed Compost with added vermiculite (15%) for extra insulation, and helps improve water retention over a long winter.

Organic Potting Greenhouse Compost for fast growing—quick plant turnaround.

Organic Potting Growbag, a special recipe that's great for melons, tomatoes, chillies. Organic, although not approved by the Soil Association.

Organic Modular Seed Compost has superfine coir, ideal for modular systems.

Organic Potting Loam Mix Compost with 5% added sterilised loam to create a balanced compost. Inspired by J1 No.2!

Organic Potting Loam-Plus Mix Compost for growers who require a fine balanced compost using sterilised loam. Also provides increased ballast to help stabilise pots in windy conditions.

VeGro composts, let you grow to vegan standards.

THE POWER OF THE SEA

To complement our Fertile Fibre ranges we now stock **Maxicrop** Soil Association approved organic seaweed-extract products. We're impressed by their growing qualities, and these products have long enjoyed professional endorsement by horticulturalists and organic farmers.

Original Seaweed Extract (Plant growth stimulant) Pure liquid seaweed extract, widely proven in scientific research—stimulates germination, rooting and establishment from seed to mature plant. Improves natural plant health. Visit www.fertilefibre.com to see our range of Maxicrop products.

The potted history

Fertile Fibre products are not the brainchild of a marketing team backed by a massive research department. So how did it all start?

TENBURY WELLS FARMER Rob Hurst and wife Kim run The Cottage Herbery, specialising in organically grown herbs, aromatics and cottage garden plants. You've probably met them selling their plants at flower shows around the country. www.thecottageherbery.co.uk

They are passionately concerned about environmental matters, and long before the destruction of the peat bogs became a popular cause, were creating their own compost.

One of Rob's farm crops was hops, and the waste left after harvesting—a mixture of leaves, stems and the coir string used to support the hops—was composted for use in the nursery.

Says Rob: 'We realised that our string composted very well indeed, and had heard about coir used being used for composting in countries where peat is unknown: It is widely popular in the USA, Australia and the Far East. I wondered if this could be developed for our own use.'

This was in 1990, and after considerable research, he located a source of supply in Sri Lanka, and for his experiments took his first delivery of two sacks in a Heathrow Airport car park.

The next stage was to ensure that the compost would be accepted to organic standards, and meet the Soil Association's requirements. This required locating a coconut grower working to accredited organic standards.

That done, Rob started buying coir by the container load.

His friend the great Geoff Hamilton—renowned as Britain's favourite gardener through his work for the BBC on TV and radio—provided wonderful advice on the development of Rob's growing media—compost mixes—and the result is the formulation for today's Fertile Fibre range of effective multi-purpose, potting, and seed composts.

Although Fertile Fibre was initially intended for their own use, friends asked for some of Rob's 'magic brown compost', and a business grew successfully from recommendation, still without active marketing.



A dream to reality...
Rob Hurst

Rising demand, more resources

Two years ago fellow farmer Matt Dent took Fertile Fibre over to devote further investment, time and resources to building the product and its associated ranges

Matt is a farmer too, the third generation of his family to own a farm near Hereford. Withington Court, with its 400 acres is situated in idyllic countryside along with 30 pedigree Herefords, 100 sheep and 50 acres of hops.

Rob maintains his close links with the company, working as their technical director. He believes that this growing medium is unrivalled: 'Fertile Fibre is the real organic alternative to peat. And when it comes to plant propagation and growing cuttings, it is better than peat at promoting root growth. Cuttings root faster, plants love it.'

Flourish! Is printed on paper produced from 75% recycled fibre. The balance of wood fibre is Forestry Stewardship Council certified, from sustainably managed forests. Manufactured to precise environmental and quality control standards ISO9002 and ISO14001



The organic alternative to peat



Fertile Fibre multipurpose, potting and seed composts are based on organic coir

No compromises—great for plant propagation and growing cuttings. Highly effective at promoting root growth.

Cuttings root faster, plants love it. Consistent quality, Soil Association certified.

A full range of organic composts and coir blocks, plus organic fertilizers and composted bark.

From a single product for committed gardeners to a bulk order for organic horticulture.

For our free information pack, or to order, phone us or visit www.fertilefibre.com

