

# Gary's Best Soils

In 1995, we created these soils to correct an industry-wide problem. The horticultural industry continues to promote compost (primarily partially decomposed dead tree parts-bark, wood) as a growing medium for pots and as an amendment to improve soil. They have ignored the fact that natural loam soil, what plants choose to grow in, is greater than 99% mineral, mostly silicon dioxide (quartz). Ideal soil is a blend of sand, silt, and clay. These particles are made mostly of quartz and are present in various sizes and shapes. Compost in Nature sits on top of actual soil, in a layer called "duff" and is the source of nutrition for the majority of plants and is the home of bacteria, fungi, and other saprophytes that feast on the dead plant material, animal manure, and other miscellaneous organic materials. This is not a good home for most plant roots and can cause poor plant growth.

GARY'S BEST TOP POT and GARY'S BEST ACID MIX were created to be a superior replacement to the compost-based soils sold by other stores. They are formulated with more permanent ingredients that discourage disease-promoting bacteria or fungi. TOP POT was created for permanent applications in containers or in the ground. It is 65% inert (permanent) material... mostly quartz. Nearly all of its volume consists of small pumice rock, perlite, and sand (all quartz). It contains a bit of charcoal (also permanent) because of its ability to hold mineral nutrients. It also is 35% peat moss which holds moisture and wicks it horizontally through the medium. Peat moss degrades over a 5 year period but does not seem to cause a disease reaction to surrounding roots. It does not contribute much to the soil volume so our TOP POT shrinks very little over time. It has a somewhat acidic pH, probably around 6 to 6.5. This is our best soil to grow long-lived plants in containers (trees, shrubs, vines).

Our ACID MIX is great for plants that like or require acidic soils (Azalea, Blueberry, Ferns, etc.) and for plants that require lots of water. The pH is just under 6. With 50% peat moss and 50% pumice, it does shrink between 10-20% over time. Although it shrinks, conditions within it remain healthy for plant roots. We also recommend it for vegetables and bedding flowers. The ingredients are considered sterile so we also use it to start seeds and cuttings. ACID MIX is also used to amend heavy (clay) soils. We sell this as our "planting mix". The pumice will aerate clay and the peat moss will lower the pH to less alkaline conditions. The pH is about 5.5. A mix of 50% ACID MIX with 50% native soil will help it breathe better which is important surrounding rootballs of plants at installation. Both ACID MIX and TOP POT can be used in the ground as a soil substitute. Be aware that they will not typically store water as well as native soil and plants surrounded by only our soil will tend to dry out more quickly during warm weather. Both can also be reused over and over, however be certain to follow normal rules of crop rotation for best results.