

# GENERAL SOIL GUIDE

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT SOIL

Good permanent soils consist of:

Sand/Silt/Clay	Charcoal
Pumice/Perlite Rock	Vermiculite
Peat Moss	Rice Hulls

These are best for long-lived plants like fruiting and ornamental trees, perennial shrubs, herbs, succulents & others. These soils are reusable, as long as crop rotation is taken into consideration.

Poor potting soils consist of:

Forest Products/Bark/Mulch
Compost/Manure/Fertilizer
Saw-dust/Wood Chips

Organic/biological materials are not recommended for the root zone of any plantings. The decomposition process will initially release nutrients but ultimately cause root rot. These materials must be renewed and belong only on the top layer above the roots, mimicking nature's natural duff layer.

## GARY'S BEST ACID MIX

Contains 50% peat moss and 50% pumice rock.

- These are permanent, sterile materials
- Retain moisture and provide good drainage
- Best for amending compact clay soils
- Best for blueberries, azaleas, ferns, roses, vegetables & more
- Reusable, as long as crop rotation is considered.
- PH approx. 5.5

## GARY'S BEST TOP POT

Contains peat moss, pumice, perlite, sand, & charcoal

- Permanent mixture (does NOT shrink)
- Provides excellent drainage (cannot over-water)
- Best for containers, pots, and raised beds.
- Best for succulents, fruit trees, CA natives, palms, plumerias, houseplants & more
- Reusable considering crop rotation
- PH between 6-6.5

## AMENDING SOIL

- When amending hard clay soil: mix existing soil with pumice rock, sand or Gary's Best Top Pot or Acid Mix in a 50/50 ratio, 50% existing clay soil and 50% amendment.
- Anything organic (bark/compost/mulch) works best on top of the soil and should never be mixed underground around the plant's roots. It will cause roots to rot.

### Keys to successful planting—WATER, OXYGEN, NUTRIENTS—in this order

- Newly installed plants can DIE—within 1 day without adequate water, within 1 week without adequate oxygen, within 1 year without adequate nutrients.

## WATER

- Container plants dry out faster, especially small ones, water daily.
- Water thoroughly, entirely saturate soil before transplanting any plant, to assist root re-establishment.
- For newly planted plants DO NOT rely on sprinklers; at 80°+ water daily, at 70°+ water every 2-3 days, at 60°+ water weekly.
- Once the plant is established, water plants 3-4 times per week. Check for wilting leaves.
- Water succulents/drought tolerant plants 1-2x per week. Check for wilting leaves.
- Drip watering saves money. A little water daily is better than a deep soak 2-3 times per week. Sprinklers or drip watering: Set timer for 3-5 minutes in the morning, and again at noon.
- Allow leaves to dry before the sun sets.

## OXYGEN

- Roots breathe oxygen that filters from the surface down through the soil. Roots can hold their breath for up to 2 days but without oxygen, they will suffocate and/or get diseased.
- Soil amended with 25% pumice will breathe well.
- Organic amendments will decompose—consuming oxygen, this is only beneficial at the surface not in the root zone.

## NUTRIENTS

- Organic fertilizers start slow (breaking down in a few weeks) but are better for plant/soil health.
- Chemical/synthetic fertilizers, like Osmocote, work within days and last up to 6 months, but allow, or even cause, the soil to die over time.
- Apply fertilizers at the surface, within top 2 inches. Apply faster acting organic fertilizers like chicken manure/blood meal to young plants.

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## BEFORE PLANTING

If you don't have time to transplant immediately, provide extra care and extra water.

DO NOT leave plants in a hot vehicle. In summer, keep plants in part sun so that their containers do not over heat. Read, ask, or research about preferred shade/sun requirements for each plant. Make sure plants that have been in the shade or a greenhouse are slowly acclimated into full sun.

## CONTAINER PLANTING

GARY'S BEST  
ACID MIX for  
small containers  
& plants that  
prefer acidic  
soil and plants  
that prefer  
ample moisture  
like blueberries,  
strawberries,  
vegetables and  
herbs

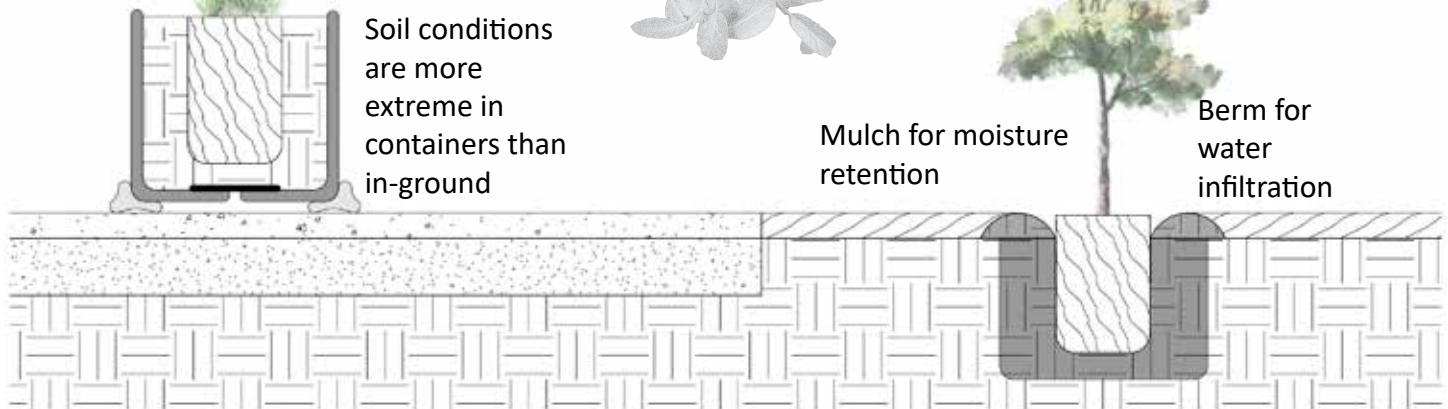
GARY'S BEST  
TOP POT for  
large containers,  
especially palms,  
succulents, and  
indoor plants

Carefully remove  
plant from pot



Or cut the pot off  
around the plant  
to leave roots  
undisturbed

Situate root-ball at level  
or slightly higher than  
soil surface, slope soil  
away from root ball,  
ensure water drains  
away from plant base



## LAGUNA HILLS NURSERY POLICIES

We guarantee that plants are true to type. • Return or credit is given at our discretion. • Eligibility for return requires a receipt, proper installation/materials, and proper care. • All sales are final on discounted items. • Plants can be returned for refund of purchase price, if mis-labeled. • Bedding plants, herbs, and veggies can be returned within 7 days of purchase, receipt required. • Bare Root Plants: are guaranteed to sprout and grow within 90 days. • Container plants, in good condition, can be returned within 30 days, replaced (no refund) if it dies within 90 days, and replaced within 1 year at management's discretion, and with a potting fee. • Plants installed with improper technique or materials do not qualify for return. • Pesticides, fertilizers can be returned within 30 days if seal is unbroken. • Unused pots can be returned within 30 days. • Unused hardware, and tools can be returned within 20 days, if defective, tools can be replaced within 90 days. • If you are concerned about the health of the plant, send a picture of it to [lhnhelp@gmail.com](mailto:lhnhelp@gmail.com). We prefer to save plants.

## FREE CLASSES Saturday Mornings – 9:15am.

1829 N Tustin Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705 (714) 542-5600

Hosted by expert horticulturists **Gary Matsuoka** and **Leah Beattie**

Attendance is free, no reservations required, class lengths vary and are live streamed:

Viewable on You-tube **Gary's Best Gardening**

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