

# Solutions

Winter 2011

for Growers

## More successful trials with Melcourt Sylvamix®

Professional growers seriously contemplating a change of growing medium will typically want to trial it first. At Melcourt we encourage this, not because we want growers to do our development work for us (after many years of development we know that Sylvamix works) but because every site is different, the management on every nursery is unique, and because every potting machine has its foibles.

So when **Charles Carr of Lowaters Nurseries**, home of the **Garden Beauty®** range, approached us about taking a pallet of Sylvamix for trials on Hebes, we were glad to help. As a nursery committed to environmental

*Garden Beauty®*

awareness across the business, looking at growing media had come as a logical step for them. In previous peat-free trials obtaining good results for Hebe had proved challenging... but this time the results have been excellent – to the extent that Charles intends to take a larger quantity next spring. "As we grow on sand beds we were keen to find out



*A well developed root system on Hebe New Zealand Gold. Similar results were obtained across 12 hebe varieties and other subjects.*

if the Sylvamix would supply enough moisture. In fact the results have been fantastic and easily as good and in some cases better than the nursery standard across 12 Hebe varieties and other subjects such as Choisya and Callistemon. We also noted a reduction in weed and liverwort growth in the Sylvamix."



*Charles Carr of Lowaters: "the results have been fantastic and easily as good as our nursery standard."*

Our Technical Director **Catherine Dawson** was pleased to see how well the trial had gone. "The more Sylvamix we send out the wider its successful applications seem to be. Lowaters' productive use of Sylvamix on sand beds is in line with other experience and allows us to disprove the notion that many peat-free products are unable to deliver enough moisture."

### Melcourt on the Sustainable Growing Media Task Force

We are delighted to report that Melcourt have been invited to join Defra's Sustainable Growing Media Task Force, chaired by Dr Alan Knight OBE and that Melcourt's Technical Director Catherine Dawson has been asked to lead one of the projects looking at the sustainability of bark in the coming years.

The Task Force will identify the specific barriers to phasing out the use of peat in horticulture in England, working with relevant stakeholders to break down these barriers and develop a comprehensive plan for future action. The targets set out in the Natural Environment White Paper will be the starting point for the work of the Task Force.

See further details at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/land-manage/soil/peat/sgm-taskforce/>

**i** We can help you with samples for trials like the one at Lowaters and with setting up or monitoring a trial. Contact us.



## THE RANGE AT A GLANCE

### Melcourt Sylvamix® Growing Media

#### Sylvamix® Potting

- ▶ A popular bedding and perennials mix
- ▶ Versatile, all-round uses
- ▶ Standard base fertilizer level
- ▶ Contains green compost

#### Sylvamix® Nursery Stock

- ▶ Open-structured, long-lasting porosity
- ▶ Lower base fertilizer level
- ▶ No green compost
- ▶ Ideal for a wide range of nursery stock and trees

#### Sylvamix® Natural

- ▶ Certified organic by the Soil Association
- ▶ All round organic growing medium

#### Sylvamix® Special

- ▶ Prescription mix made to order
- ▶ Wide range of options such as: Controlled release fertilizer, pesticides, clay/loam, wetting agents etc

### Growing Media Ingredients

Potting Bark™

Propagating Bark™

Growbark® Pine

Growbark® Mixed Conifer

Hortibark® Pine

Hortibark® Mixed Conifer

Sylvafibre®

Orchid Bark™ Coarse

Orchid Bark™ Medium

### Partnerships with our Distributors

Melcourt believe that customer care is paramount. We work closely with our distributors to ensure that Melcourt products are easily available. Regular dialogue between us means that our distributor representatives are well informed and technical back-up is always on hand. Our website

[www.melcourt.co.uk](http://www.melcourt.co.uk)

provides details of your nearest distributor (as well as full technical information on every product) or a quick call to our office

01666 502711

will give you an instant answer.

## “Peat free myths busted,” says Midland Regional Growers chairman Geoff Caesar

Members of the Midlands Regional Growers Group made a trip to Melcourt’s headquarters in Tetbury recently in a visit which, according to its chairman Geoff Caesar, “busted a few myths about the availability and suitability of non-peat products for the production of plants.” The group, which in addition to Geoff Caesar from Bransford Webbs, included nurseries such as Boningale, Hugh Nunn, Wyevale Hawkins, Hayloft Plants and Merediths, were shown around our state-of-the-art growing media manufacturing facility together with Melcourt’s bark processing site.

Issues such as availability and competitiveness were discussed. Geoff Caesar commented further, “We had a fascinating day. At Bransford we have considerable previous experience of using Melcourt products and will be establishing new trials for next spring. Melcourt are a local business for members of the Midland Regional

Growers and that presents a number of opportunities for growing media.” Presentations to small groups of growers are an effective way for Melcourt to demonstrate first-hand the lengths to which we go to ensure excellent quality every time, and to



Some of the Midland Regional Growers group at Tetbury

be able to discuss the real situation regarding availability rather than the somewhat inaccurate views we often read in the press.



We can arrange a similar tour for your staff or groups to which you are affiliated. Please contact us to arrange a visit.

## Technical sales team strengthened

We’ve appointed **Neil Gray** as Technical Sales Manager to further strengthen our support for growers. Neil is well respected by professionals, and his extensive experience in production horticulture and his understanding of the practical issues surrounding growing media will prove invaluable as we respond to the explosion of interest in our range of peat-free products.

Neil started out in horticulture with a National Diploma in Horticulture at Merrist Wood College and after spells in plant production with Yoder Toddington and New Place Nurseries, he gained further experience at Vapogro and Solufeed. He is a former vice chairman of the Growing Media Association and IPPS committee member.

“I’ve worked in horticulture for many years and have seen the positive trend towards peat reduction and peat-free growing media by the professional

market,” says Neil. “Melcourt products have been tried, tested and proven and are now seen as market leaders in this area. With my experience of plant production, plant nutrition and growing media knowledge, I look forward to meeting Melcourt customers and helping them to make a successful and profitable transition to peat free production.”



Neil Gray at the Melcourt trial site



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Viola in Sylvamix Potting

## Sylvamix at the HTA Bedding Focus Conference

The HTA recently funded a trial at East Malling Research to demonstrate the performance of various generic alternatives to peat. The results, showing that all of the media grew commercially acceptable plants, were presented by growing media consultant Susie Holmes at the HTA Bedding Focus Conference in November. Melcourt’s Sylvamix Potting was chosen to represent forest by-products and we were very pleased to see that its performance was amongst the best in the trial.