

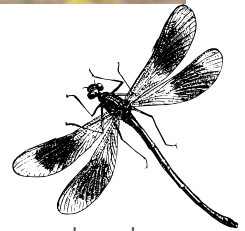
# SEVEN BENDS AND FRIENDS



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEVEN BENDS NURSERY



## *Letter from lara*



Dear Friends of Flora,

It's that time again - SPRING is on its way!

Given the increase in emails in the past month, I can tell you are all excited to get your hands dirty for the 2024 gardening season. I have to admit, I love getting dirty. There is something to be said about just embracing the muddy knees and dirt-stained cheeks that come from spending a day at the farm. Oh, and the compost! How I love that earthy smell, haha.

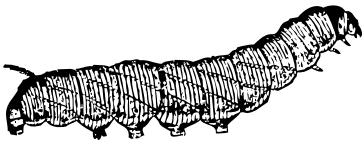
At Seven Bends Nursery, we put a lot of effort into thinking about how we can approach the production of native plants sustainably, while also balancing the challenge of managing thousands of plants at a time. We diligently reuse pots until their end of life, use best practices in integrated pest management to control and treat pests and diseases, and most powerful of all - grow healthy plants with strong "immune systems".

Soil is at the foundation, literally, of all that we do, and as such requires as much careful consideration as we can muster. Although everything we consume has an environmental cost, we strive to use sustainable soil ingredients that are mixed to cater to each plant's unique needs. Read on to learn more about what components make up soil mixes and how to select ingredients that are beneficial to your plants and more sustainable for the planet.

Go on - get down and dirty this spring with a smile on your face knowing you are doing the best you can for our planet and yourself.

Happy planting!

lara



[Website](#)



[Webstore](#)



[Fairs](#)



# Here's the Dirt:



## THE SUSTAINABILITY OF SOIL INGREDIENTS

If you like to garden or even just enjoy hosting the occasional house plant or two in your home or office, you've likely been introduced to the boggling array of soil options available. How do you figure out what to buy - what is good for your plants and also for the planet?

Soil is undoubtedly an important consideration in growing plants of all types. Different plants require different mixes comprised of components that have varying water-holding capacities and nutrient levels. And, the options for soil components that fulfill a plant's needs also vary in how sustainable they are. It is an important decision with clear implications on the health of your plant and your planet. Learning about soils and the components within them is a great step towards making sustainable choices that benefit both you and your plants!



## Announcements

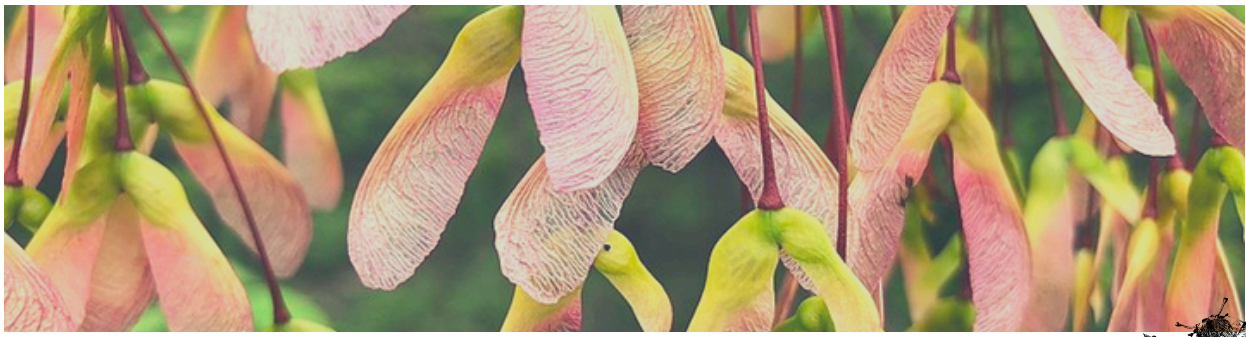
### Throwing Shade VA Program

Eligible species priced at \$50 or more can receive a \$25 discount as courtesy of the Throwing Shade VA program! Read pg. 7 for more information.

### Mondays at the Farm!

We have opened the nursery back up for Mondays at the Farm appointments from March 1st to October 28th of 2024. More details on pg.8. We can hardly wait to see you there!



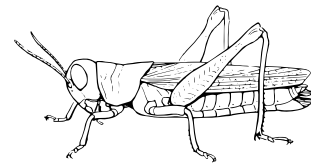


### What is in a soil mix?

Soil mixes that are bought at garden stores typically have three components: water-retaining material, draining material, and nutritional material. **Water-retaining materials** hold onto water, releasing it slowly over time. This increases the amount of time that roots are exposed to moisture and constant watering. Examples of components found in soil mixes used for water retention include sphagnum, peat moss, coconut coir, vermiculite, leafmould, wood chips/bark, and worm castings. **Draining materials** form air gaps in the soil structure, giving water a place to drain and increasing aeration. The air and water ratio in soil is important for optimal plant growth. Not only do plant roots need oxygen, but microorganisms that live in the soil need air to survive and produce nutrients that plants need. Examples of components found in soil mixes used for drainage include perlite and sand. **Nutritional materials** provide plants with minerals and nutrients essential for vegetative growth and reproductive development of plants. Examples of components found in soil mixes used for nutrient supplementation include composted plant material, manure, meal from alfalfa, fish, or bone, and inorganic fertilizers like Osmocote or Miracle Grow. The options are many, but unfortunately, some of the soil mix components used for water retention, drainage, and nutrition are unsustainable.

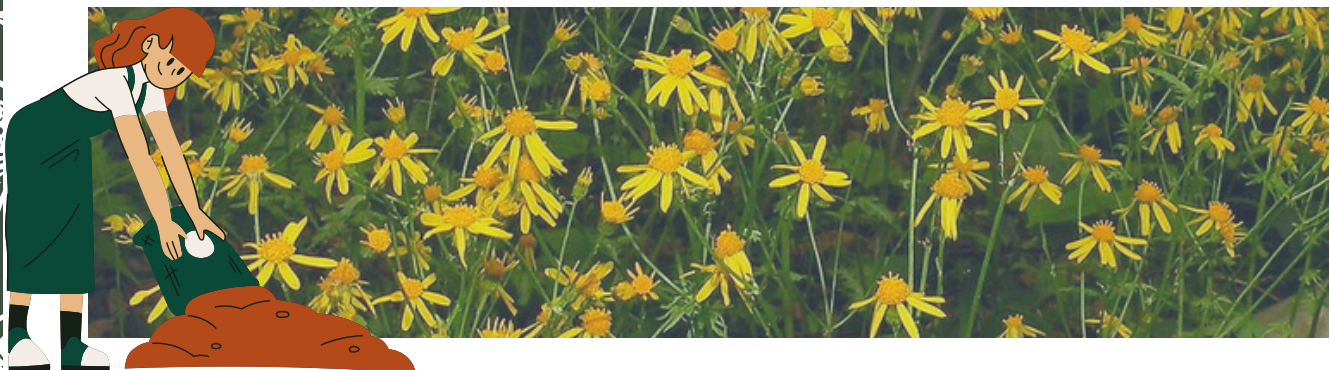
## Sustainable or Unsustainable? That is the question.

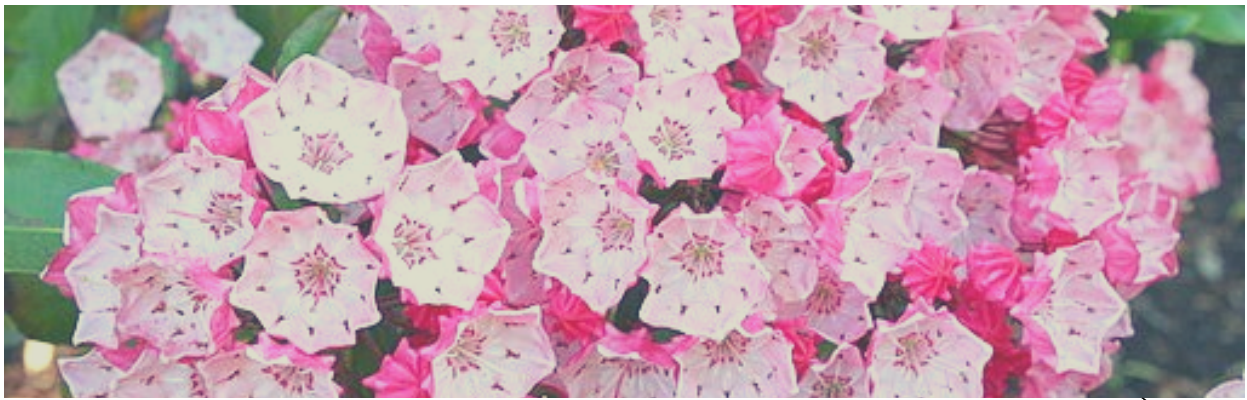
### Less Sustainable Ingredients:



#### Peat moss

Peat moss is harvested by draining and scraping peat bog wetlands. This destroys the unique habitat that makes up peat bogs and releases carbon dioxide usually trapped in the bogs into the atmosphere. Peat is a nonrenewable resource as once peatlands have been destroyed they can't be restored to their former state. It takes an entire century for just 2 inches of peat to accumulate in peat bog wetlands!





### **Vermiculite**

Vermiculite is a mica-like rock harvested by mining. Prepping a site for mining vermiculite involves removing vegetation, soil, and rock- decimating the local ecosystem naturally found there. Once vermiculite is mined it is shipped to a factory where fossil fuels are used to heat vermiculite rock to over 1000 degrees.

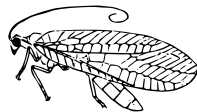
### **Perlite**

Perlite is a volcanic glass that contains small amounts of trapped water. Just like vermiculite, mining perlite destroys ecosystems that were present before mining sites as vegetation, soil, and rocks are removed. Perlite is also processed by heating volcanic glass to 1,600 degrees with the use of fossil fuels.

### **Inorganic Fertilizers**

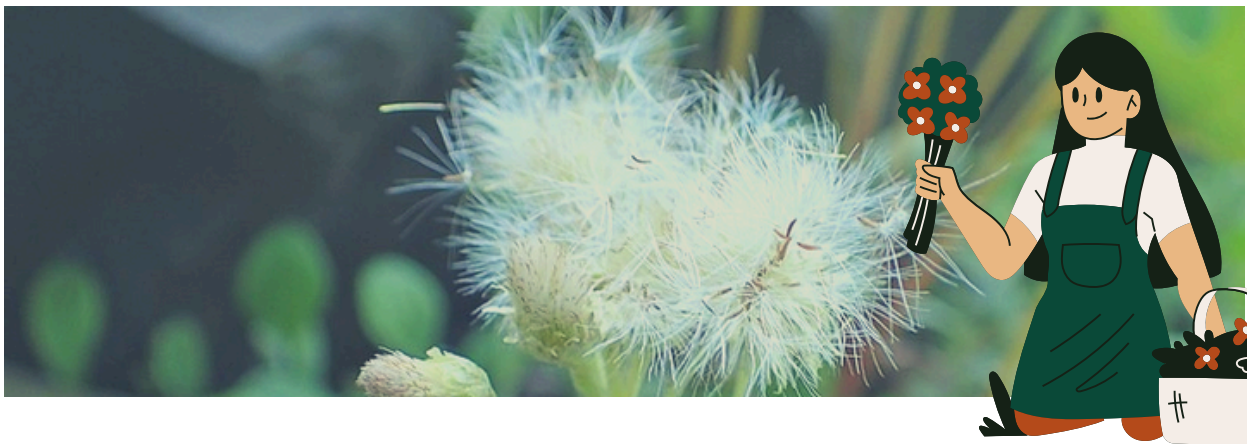
Inorganic fertilizers are derived from rocks and minerals processed both physically and chemically. The problem with inorganic fertilizers is that, compared to organic fertilizers, they release nutrients into the environment much more quickly causing an overabundance of nutrients in the soil. Access nutrients in organic fertilizers burn plant roots and are washed away into the watershed.

### **More Sustainable Ingredients:**



### **Coconut Coir**

Coconut coir is an organic byproduct and renewable resource made by soaking and beating the husk that is removed from the outside of a coconut seed. Compared to unsustainable peat moss, coconut coir lasts longer in soil mixes, has a neutral pH, is sterile, and is better at improving soil porosity. Coconut coir also holds 30% more water than peat moss!





### **Worm Castings**

Worm castings are produced by worms when they break down organic material through digestion and defecation. Worm castings have two benefits to soil: they help with water retention and act as a slow-releasing fertilizer. Worm castings are great at absorbing water and nutrients that would normally wash away during watering.



### **Sand**

Sand is used as a drainage material and is both easy to find and cheap to purchase. Sand makes for good drainage as the loose, porous, and coarse grains allow for water to run through loam and clay soils.

### **Compost**

Compost is created by the natural decomposition of organic materials in a controlled and oxygen-rich environment. Unlike inorganic fertilizers, compost provides nutrients for plants while simultaneously building healthy soil. Compost releases nutrients slowly preventing an overabundance of nutrients from leaking into watershed.



### **Bone meal**

Bone meal is made by drying and grounding animal bones into a powder. Bone meal is a natural source of important nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus that promote root growth and development. Bone meal is safer and more environmentally friendly than inorganic calcium and phosphorus fertilizers as they break down and release nutrients slowly.

### **Reusing soil**

A sustainable choice you can make is to reuse soil mixes that you already have. Just remember to refresh with natural fertilizers between uses!





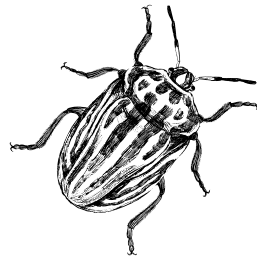
## Finding Soil Mixes

Big box garden stores may have a wide variety of soil mixes but unfortunately, almost all contain unsustainable ingredients. When looking for more sustainable soil choices check out your local nurseries, garden stores, and farming co-ops as they have a better chance of supplying local and sustainable products. Your best bet for using a sustainable soil mix is to create your own by buying individual ingredients. Not only will it save money but you will also know exactly what is in your soil!

## What to do now?

Whether a gardener or a houseplant extraordinaire you can make a positive impact on both your ecosystem and those far away by using sustainable soil mixes. Now that you know something about the sustainability of ingredients used for water retention, drainage, and nutrition you can successfully check soil bags or create your own sustainable soil mixes! But before going through the hassle of trekking across town to buy soil or making your own mix take a moment to think about if you need another bag. Maybe you already have some soil at home you can recycle! Becoming an educated consumer, even as a plant person, can help you make better choices for your plants and your planet.

Happy planting!





Seven Bends  
NURSERY

Is now offering a

# TREE & SHRUB

DISCOUNT

**\$25 OFF**

*All native trees valued \$50 or more  
From March 1st-May 1st 2023*

Thanks to our acceptance  
into the Throwing Shade VA  
program!

**BUY NOW**



**Throwing Shade VA**





Seven Bends  
NURSERY

## Mondays at the Farm

Seven Bends Nursery  
welcomes you to shop our  
spring blooms in person!

Sign up for an appointment  
slot to shop or pick up  
orders on Mondays at our  
working farm.



Strasburg, VA

Exact location will be given  
when you sign up for a  
timeslot.



Mondays

March 1- October 28, 2024

Sign up by clicking [here](#)

**Come join us at the  
farm!**

