



**VANCOUVER ISLAND ROCK AND
ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY**

**Soil Mixtures
and
Recipes**

April 2003



The following mixes are intended as a guide only. There are many recipes and each grower has his/her own favourites. The ones included here have come from members of the Society as well as from other sources such as books and specialty nurseries. It is hoped that you will find them of use.



Grit - small, sharp, angular, rough, hard particles of stone. It is available at farm and feed supply stores as poultry (granite) grit and is generally sold in 3 sizes from fine to coarse.

Leaf Mould - must be thoroughly composted before use. It holds some moisture but is crumbly and helps drainage when mixed with peat. It is full of beneficial microbes.

Peat - coarse peat or 'Grower's Grade' is best. Finely powdered peat is unsatisfactory

Pumice - naturally occurring volcanic rock, lightweight and somewhat porous; it holds some water and nutrients; helps drainage and is less expensive than turface. It is very good for plunge benches.

Turface - a lightweight clay aggregate made by heating clay granules until they expand; holds some water and is fairly good at holding nutrients; also contains a low level of nutrients itself.

SOIL MIX FOR SEEDING AND POTTING (Al Smith)

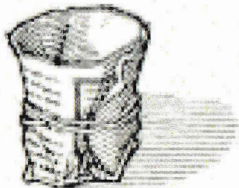
40% peat
40% coarse sand
20% perlite

JOHN INNES POTTING COMPOST

7 parts sandy loam
3 parts peat
2 parts grit or coarse sand

This is the basic ratio for all three John Innes composts. They differ only in the added fertilizer elements.

If desired a slow release fertilizer could be added according to the manufacturer's instructions and/or the needs of particular plants.



SOIL MIX FOR LEWISIAS *cotyledon*, *tweedyi*, *columbiana*

1 part John Innes Compost
2 parts peat
2 parts grit

SOIL MIX FOR LEWISIA *rediviva*

1 part John Innes Compost
2 parts mixed sand and grit



GLOSSARY

Chippings - a term used in Britain. It is chips of rock graded into various sizes and often used as top dressing for pots. No doubt grit could be substituted as a soil conditioner.

Coarse Sand - sand that has not been washed and is comprised of multiple sized particles which facilitate sharp drainage.

Compost - North Americans use this term to refer to well rotted organic matter. The British usage of compost refers to a mixture such as the 3 John Innes potting composts.

Composted Bark - the bark particles should still be recognizable so that the material is not too fine.

Gravel - is used in road building and concrete manufacture. It consists of crushed stone and is angular in shape.

BASIC POTTING MIX FOR ALPINES & ROCK GARDEN PLANTS IN POTS (Beaver Creek Nurseries)

- 1 part porous organic material....peat moss, fibrous loam, fine composted bark, leaf mould or a combination of these
- 1 part porous aggregate....turface or pumice which hold a limited amount of water and nutrients and help with aeration/drainage
- 1 part nonporous aggregate....perlite or sand which holds very little moisture or nutrients but promotes drainage/aeration

This mix requires periodic applications of dilute liquid fertilizer.

SOIL MIXTURE FOR ALPINES IN PANS

- 1 part good loam
- 1 part peat
- 1 part leaf mould
- 1 part coarse sand
- 2 parts grit

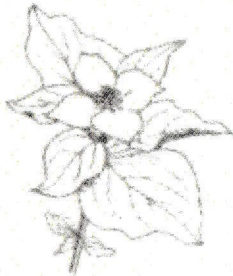
RHODODENDRON POTTING MIX
(Norm Todd)

1 part good sandy top soil
1 part finely composted fir or hemlock bark

Use 10-8-6 fertilizer with all 13 trace elements present. This is used separately and not mixed with the potting mix

SOIL MIX FOR CORNUS CANADENSIS
(Bunchberry) (Ted Browning)

80% well rotted wood
20% leaf mould



SOIL MIXTURE FOR BULBS GROWN IN POTS
(Ian McTaggart-Cowan)

2 parts potting soil
2 parts screened leaf mould
1 part perlite
1 part coarse sand
bone meal
Use 6" to 9" deep pot
Place bulbs $\frac{1}{2}$ depth of pot
Dress pot with fine gravel

SOIL MIX FOR PRIMULA MARGINATA
(Maedythe Martin)

1/3 part loam
1/3 part peat
1/3 part granite grit

SOIL MIX FOR PRIMULAS

(Tony James)

- 2 parts potting soil (not peaty)
- 1 part #2 granite grit
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Dolomite lime per 4 litres of mix
- 1 Tbsp. bone meal per 4 litres of mix



SOIL MIX FOR PLEIONES

(Fraser's Thimble Farms Nursery)

- 50% peat
- 50% perlite

SAXIFRAGE MIX BASED upon John Innes Potting Compost (Rex Murfitt)

- 1 part compost (John Innes)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ part coarse sand
- 1 part gravel or chippings
- More chippings or grit may be added if there is danger of poor drainage.
- No fertilizer need be added.
- This formula can be used for plants grown in rock garden or in pots.

SAND AND PEAT MIXTURE for Kabschia and Silver Saxifrages

- 1 part coarse sand
- 1 part peat
- This is the mix used at the Silver Saxifages Trials at Wisley, England

Soil mixes for Pleiones

1. Al Smith's

- 2 parts peat
- 2 parts sand
- 1 part perlite

2. Ian McTaggart-Cowan's

- 2 parts peat
- 2 parts #1 granite grit (really sharp sand)
- 1 part perlite
- ½ part sterilized potting soil
- handful of soil used for pleiones the previous year

3. Fancy Mix

- 3 parts medium orchid bark
- 3 parts fine orchid bark
- 1 part perlite
- 1 part partly decomposed oak leaves put through a ½ inch screen

4. Kew Mix

In bottom half of pot use:

- 6 parts ungraded orchid bark (fines removed)
- 1 part coarse perlite
- 1 part sphagnum moss peat

in top half of pot use:

same mix but finer texture