



Aylett Nurseries
The Complete Garden Centre

Gardening for the Environment, Health & Wellbeing

Information Leaflet No. 83



North Orbital Road (A414)
St. Albans, Herts.
AL2 1DH

Tel: 01727 822255

Fax: 01727 823024

Web: www.aylettnurseries.co.uk

This leaflet covers the following topics;

- 1. Peat**
- 2. Air Quality & Air So Pure Plants**
- 3. Water**
- 4. Composting**
- 5. Gardening & Health**



Overview

A garden can touch every part of your life...

The way we live our lives and take care of our immediate environment will contribute to the impact we have on our planet and indeed our health.

As gardeners, we turn to our 'patch' to find a place of calm. We reconnect with the wonder of nature and whether our passion is for the herbaceous border or the veg plot, we all find common ground. Of course, our impact on the environment should be forefront in our minds and our aim, to leave the smallest footprint on our planet.

Don't feel left out if you are renting a property, you can also reap the benefits of creating your own outdoor space by using pots and plants that can then be taken with you to your next home.

Nature provides us with all that we need and we in turn can help to keep it that way... Plants and horticulture can make urban areas more resilient by helping to alleviate flash floods, clean the air and water, absorb noise and moderate extremes of warmth and cold.

Plant a tree - our gardens compose of over 25% of the trees in non-forest environments. Not only will a tree give your garden structure, interest and shade, it will also provide habitat for small animals, birds and insects.

Our trees truly are the 'lungs of the earth', filtering air and water pollution, removing carbon dioxide and creating oxygen.



Grow your own veg – experience 'The Good Life'. Home grown vegetables are fresher and nutrient rich, with zero packaging and zero food miles. Get the whole family involved, research shows that children are encouraged to eat what they've grown thereby increasing their vegetable intake. The peelings and trimmings are perfect for your compost bin! More information in our **Vegetables no.36** booklet.

Encourage wildlife into your garden –

No garden is complete without the pleasure of seeing a variety of birds and insects enjoying the welcoming oasis you have created. Plant your garden with a selection of nectar and pollen rich plants to encourage bees and butterflies. Place bird feeders at safe heights from cats and remember to provide fresh water. A pond, however small, is always a great addition



to any garden, where it will attract and sustain a variety of creatures. Further information can be found in our **Attracting Wildlife into your Garden No.78** booklet.

Peat

What is Peat?



Peat is made up of incomplete decomposed plant remains (sedges, reeds, grasses, mosses etc.) and is formed when natural process of decay is stopped by waterlogging and oxygen is excluded. The plant remains become compacted over hundreds/thousands of years to form peat.

Peat is the major constituent in most horticultural growing media, as it is well suited to a wide range of plant species and growing regimes.

Why is it important to reduce our Peat consumption?

- Peat bogs are the UK's most threatened wildlife habitat supporting some plant, bird and insect species unique to that environment.
- Peatlands contain one third of the world's carbon, exceeding that of the world's forests. When the top layer of peatland vegetation is removed and the peat is exposed, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as the plant remains decompose, exacerbating global warming and climate change.
- Peat bogs have a role in the global hydrological/water cycle, as they contain 10% of global freshwater resources. In the UK peatlands are thought to play an important role in flood prevention as peat acts like a sponge holding significant amounts of water.
- Because peat takes many years to form it is a unique geological and biological data base.

What are we doing about this?

We are committed to talking to customers about peat and the alternatives that are available. Where possible we are:

- Providing information so you can easily find out about the alternatives to peat.
- Labelling bags and/or associated point of sale so you can see the peat content of the product you are purchasing.
- Providing alternative products of the right quality and offering peat-free and peat reduced products at the same price as peat-based mixes.

What can you use instead of peat?

In Compost

We stock low peat and peat free composts. Try New Horizon Peat Free (Which? Best Buy) or Sylvagrow Peat Free Multi-Purpose compost.

For Mulching

Instead of using peat as a mulch around plants to help reduce weed growth, retain moisture and enrich the soil and its structure, try using bark chips or Strulch.

A bark mulch is made from selected grades of bark chips that can be used on flower beds and borders, trees and fruit bushes. It provides a decorative ground covering providing excellent weed suppression, moisture retention and thermal protection for plant roots.

Strulch ® is a light and easy to use garden mulch made from wheat straw. A patented process is used to 'preserve' the straw so that it lasts for up to two years and gives an earthy brown colour. Strulch has a neutral pH and can be used throughout the garden on borders, raised beds, around cultivated fruit and on vegetable plots.

We use Strulch in our celebration garden and also find it extremely effective at controlling slugs and snails who of course love the young shoots of the dahlia plants.

For Soil Improvement

When planting shrubs etc. products such as Westland Soil Conditioner can be worked into the planting hole to improve the soil conditions to help new plants to establish.

Air Quality & Air So Pure Plants

The quality of the air in which we live is essentially important to our health, our fitness and our well-being. Houseplants can help purify the air in our homes, schools and offices, releasing oxygen making us feel better. The air quality in these spaces is contaminated by chemical substances that are not only released from furniture, clothing, floor covering, wall covering, paint, printers etc. but also by people themselves. Extensive scientific research has shown that plants are capable of absorbing these substances from the air, cleaning the air in that way.

What is Air So Pure?

Air So Pure consists of a group of plants whose health benefits have been scientifically proven. These 'natural air cleaners' are especially selected for their strong air purifying effect.

The presence of these plants, that purify the air in your office or home, give the following benefits;

- Create a healthier and more comfortable space around you and therefore more well-being and productivity and less illness.
- Air So Pure plants can help against fatigue.
- Noxious gases are neutralized by the plants taking them in and breaking them down.
- They can improve the humidity by a plants regulatory evaporation process.
- Air So Pure plants make the air healthier by converting carbon dioxide into oxygen.

Information taken from www.airsopure.nl



The purest plant range:

- Areca
- Asplenium
- Calathea
- Chlorophytum
- Didymochlaena truncatula
- Dracaena
- Ivy
- Kentia Palm
- Nephrolepis
- Phlebodium
- Spathiphyllum

Introduce an Air So Pure plant to your home, school or office environment today and enjoy cleaner air and the health benefits it brings.

The team in our Houseplant Department would be delighted to help you choose the perfect plant for your surroundings.

Water Conservation

Water is a precious resource and it is essential that gardeners use it wisely.

Save it *on a rainy day*...

Install a **water butt**: More than 21,000 litres of rain falls on the roof of an average UK home - a water butt can capture this rain, allowing you to use it in your garden. It is important to ensure that your water butt does not overflow once it is full. A water butt positioned next to the wall of a house could become damp from the large concentration of water overflowing onto the ground. A **rainwater diverter** attached to the downpipe will automatically direct the rainwater down the drain when the water butt is full. Rain diverter kit, available instore. If you want to catch even more rainwater from your roof it may be cheaper and easier to link two or more water butts. Speak to the team in our main shop for further details.

An **automated irrigation system** delivers water to where it's needed. Water timers, Sensor Control or indeed the Cloud Controller (which enables you to control your garden watering from anywhere in the world) are all designed to take on the chore, saving you water, time and effort. The Easy Drip system, from Hozelock, can easily be adapted to any outdoor space and irrigation hoses with sprinkler components ensure the water is delivered efficiently.

Permeable parking: If you're an urban dweller and have a parking space instead of a front garden then make it permeable paving to help drainage and reduce the risk of localised flooding - permeability=sustainability. Kelkay Gravel Pave System is ideal.

Make the most of what you've got...

Knowing your gardens soil type and sun aspect will make plant choices much easier. Plants will thrive and perform well if given the correct growing conditions that your garden offers.

Choose British plants that are appropriate for your local climate. A lot of native British plants are also in fact drought resistant. For advice about suitable plants and plant recommendations please ask at our Plant Information office or check with the RHS who have useful online advice pages, www.rhs.org.uk. British grown plants will reduce the environmental impact of production and transportation and reduce trade miles and the carbon footprint of the plant growing industry.

Don't pour it away... Water from an old vase of flowers is nutrient rich, pour it round the base of a shrub or on your pot plants. You could also put leftover ice from your drink into the soil of your hanging baskets.

Mulch, mulch, mulch... By far the best way to retain moisture in the soil. Also, mulching can be a very effective way of feeding your soil, as the woody mulch breaks down, releasing nutrients, thereby increasing long term soil fertility. Mulching your borders in the Winter will prevent weeds emerging in the Spring and will also help to retain the Winter rain in the soil, giving your plants the best start to the new growing year.

Water at the right time and in the right way... Use a watering can, filled from a water butt, or hose with a trigger to water plants for more direct and less wasteful watering. Try and do this in the morning and evening - midday watering means more water will be lost via evaporation.

Keep your butt clean... Make sure you keep your water butt/s clean – leaf debris, dirt and bird-muck from your roof can contaminate the water in your water butt/s, clean it out once a year. Always ensure that your water butt has a tightly fitting lid and preferably a filter fitted to the rain water diverter.

Composting

We are, quite rightly, in an age of environmental awareness. It is now normal for us to think **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**. Waste management is a costly business and our councils ask us to ensure responsible management of our own rubbish. We are encouraged to do this at home, where we are provided with 3 or more different bins and pods, into which we separate our household waste.

To further reduce this 'taken away' waste, the process of **home composting** is easy. Interestingly, around 40% of the average household waste is suitable for home composting. With this in mind, it is satisfying to produce your own garden compost to feed and condition the soil and to make or enhance your potting compost mixes.

Our **Greener Gardener booklet no.12** provides you with a detailed list of the green and brown compost ingredients required to produce quality garden compost.

As a general guide, your **compost bin** should be sited in a sunny or part shaded area and placed directly onto the soil or turf, but away from water courses. You should aim for equal amounts of greens to browns by volume, layered to a thickness of at least 30cm.

A good compost heap will heat up, then start to cool, that is when turning or mixing is required. Turning your compost heap lets in air, which allows fast acting aerobic microbes to get working on the composting process.

The composting process can be quickened by adding a compost activator like **Garotta**. Indeed, the composting is naturally quickened by turning the heap often, although the process may take up to a year.

Once your compost is dark brown and has a sweet earthy smell, the compost process is complete.

Gardening & Health

It's a win win...

The effect of gardening to our health is broad and diverse, being both physically and mentally beneficial. It is because of the benefit it brings to our complete 'being' that gardening does in fact contribute something positive to everyone at almost any age.

Physical Benefits – studies show that prolonged light gardening can burn more calories than a gym session. Despite feeling much easier to do, it is the length of time spent gardening combined with the steady burn of calories can reward one with increased stamina and contribute to weight loss.

Also, gardening is energetic and relaxing at the same time and as a hobby it is linked to long term reductions in overall reported health problems.

For **the elderly**, it is a great source of physical activity, helping maintain a sense of identity and independence as well as maintenance of good gait and balance which helps to prevent falls.

Children benefit from school gardening, and studies reveal that their fruit and vegetable intake increases with their broader knowledge from growing food. Positive results in children's sense of well-being, personal achievement and pride, especially among those with learning difficulties where a non-academic task is enjoyed.

Overall, most people would find a decrease in blood pressure, improved mood and self-esteem when enjoying regular gardening as part of their healthy lifestyle and this in turn has a significantly positive effect on mental wellbeing.

Mental Health Benefits – Gardening will always benefit even the most chilled out among us. The chemical release in our brains of Serotonin gives us a sense of wellbeing and happiness. Consistent Serotonin release is linked with exercise, like gardening, done at a comfortable and steady pace. And we can all enjoy a boost of Serotonin by getting out into natural daylight.

Gardening is considered as a general stress reliever for most of us as we deal with the day to day challenges of normal life, but there are others who tap into the healing effects of regular gardening. It is widely recognised as therapeutic for those suffering **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder** and other mental health issues.

Gardening benefits people suffering with **anxiety and depression**. Research shows that gardening is a way to engage with nature through wilderness therapy, horticultural therapy and urban green spaces. This time spent gardening is associated with increased emotion regulation, decreased neural activity and as a result, decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression. Leading on from this, gardening is a perfect way to practice Mindfulness.

Mindfulness – stems from Eastern Buddhist traditions and practices. Essentially, to focus the mind on the present without judgement. There is a calmness when gardening as we become all consumed with the task, this is called ‘Flow’ – describing a state of mind when completely absorbed in an activity. Mindfulness allows us to reconnect with our surroundings, to appreciate them and to understand ourselves better.

**This leaflet is available in
alternative formats**

Please ask a member of staff or
Tel: 01727 822255
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