

Scott's Australia in discussion of Leaf Root and Fruit Potting Media Plant Trial – as conducted by Duncan Cocking.

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Scott's Australia duly recognises independent growing media trials and encourages customers, store owners and industry to do so. Trial data is a crucial process for Research and Development of new and inspiring products at Scott's Australia. The opportunity to better understand specific local issues with batch dated product aids our technical team on investigative matters. So for this reason we are appreciative of the effort taken to explore our Scott's branded mixes in the Leaf Root and Fruit trial of 2017.

What are the Scott's Australia systems and procedures for delivering quality growing media?

All growing media for Scott's Australia is manufactured either in our own plants of Sydney and Hastings or by our many sub-contractor facilities from Queensland, New South Wales (regional), South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. Each facility is independently audited on an annual or bi-annual basis by SAI Global the regulator for Standards Australia AS3743, AS4454 and AS4419. Under these schemes the process and steps to ensure sites are manufacturing to these standards and our claims on label premium red tick or black meet the requirements by qualification. There is also multiple specifications, internal Scott's audits to ensure tighter control measures and best practise is adhered. The diversity of materials, plant processes enables this complex system some periods of less desirable specification. We ensure this measure of issue is limited and isolated through strict non-conformance investigations.

How does the Scott's formulation work in growing media?

Both Scott's Australia and Debco provide over 90 years of growing media experience and over 140 years of plant nutrition knowledge together. Scott's uses only premium sustainable forestry pine bark and superior nutrition including Osmocote® control release fertilisers and organic minerals. The potting media is engineered for optimum air filled porosity, water holding capacity and nutritional feeding. All composts are assured under the AS4454 standard and organic mediums with either NASAA or Australian Organic. Our Professional range uses advanced coir fibres and chips coupled with professional grade wetting agents and world leading water storing crystals. All our

manufacturing sites operate to the specified bill of materials that are costed in system which ensures total tracking to budgets. This means no products can be made without all ingredients being included. Our Pure Organic media meets a 3 month feed claim where the Debco organic has no feeding claim. All our organic mixes prescribe additional feeding at planting or during growth to ensure plant health.

Scott's Australia's reflection on Leaf Root and Fruit trial data.

Scott's Australia contacted Leaf Root and Fruit to first understand the batch details printed on each product. Gathering batch details enables acknowledgment of manufacture date and the release pH and EC results. Pure Organic and Osmocote Plus Organics were provided, however the Osmocote Professional Premium Plus and Debco Organic were not provided. Pure Organic was dated from 2016, 19th February with pH 6.4 and EC 0.68. Osmocote Plus Organic Vegetable and Herb was 2016, 19th August with pH 5.96 and EC 1.38. Know data could be provided for Osmocote Professional Premium Plus or Debco Organic. Both products acknowledged met AS3743 release requirements. Scott's cannot ensure that the product used were appropriate for trialling based on the ages found. The data described is not a true reflection of Scott's and Debco quality and provides a biased view we believe based on bag age alone. Therefore the integrity of this trial has been placed in jeopardy when the data is stacking 1 year old mixes against other unknown aged products. The Australian Standard recommends a best before use date. This is a process Scott's has considered but also knows from 6 years of sales data that no growing media is available for sale in stores longer than 4 months from delivery date.

Aspects of our Pure Organic Premium Potting and Planting and Debco Organic were labelled as high priced and ineffective in growth. When comparing organic lines against non-certified you are making large comparisons that cannot be measured equally. For instance the comment about 3 month nutrition for premium AS3743 products made in the article is mis-leading. No 3 month feeding requirement is written with the standard. The AS3743 premium red tick media must hold a minimum requirement of nitrate and ammonium and only 1 month fertiliser should be made available for a 2 month date of manufacture product ^[1]. Scott's Australia's own trials use Osmocote Professional Premium Plus as the standard product to gauge other mixes against. When we run our verification trials annually we include Osmocote Professional Premium Plus in a randomised block trial of 4 replicates knowing the age of product with nutritional inputs. Scott's could never verify products based on label alone and if we publish against competitors must state batch details from contacting

them firstly. Scott's does encourage data to be published if the acknowledgment of these details can be met.

Scott's Australia wishes to support more work in the industry exploring growing media research and verification trialling. Scott's Australia in this instance however requests that no data be released to the public unless aspects of batch detail can be verified. Our technical team would like to aid your trial work in future with accurate detailing of our mixes and hopes that you continue to support our companies growing media. Our focus at Scott's is also on educating the public and supporting customers with correct information on our products. If we can be of assistance to provide specialised talks on growing media, fertilisers and control agents please contact our Advice Line team on 1800 804 219.

Reference:

1. AS 3743 – 2003, *Australian StandardTM Potting Mixes*, page 6, section 1.5.4, *Premium Potting Mix*.