

## **GROWING MEDIA ASSOCIATION CODE OF PRACTICE FOR QUANTITY**

### **MEASUREMENT, PACK FILLING and VOLUME DECLARATION**

#### **1. PRINCIPLES**

- 1.1 This Code of Practice establishes a minimum standard for quantity measurement, pack filling and volume declaration of growing media and soil improvers to be employed by members of the Growing Media Association (GMA).

**Adoption of this Code is a mandatory condition of membership of the Growing Media Association.** Where a GMA member only sells product by weight, adoption of this Code is not a condition of membership.

- 1.2 This Code of Practice is effective from 2 February 2009 and replaces the version 'Determination of Quantity for Peat and Peat-based Growing Media, Soil Improvers and Mulches', last revised in October 2001.
- 1.3 The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPUTR) and The Business Protection from Misleading Marketing Regulations 2008 (BPMR) became law in the UK on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008, prohibiting unfair commercial practices, including misleading statements, actions or omissions. It is acknowledged that some organic materials used in growing media and soil improvers can lose volume during packing and delivery especially when stored for prolonged periods. It shall be the duty of GMA members to operate due diligence, ensuring that when such materials are used, packs are filled appropriately such that the terms of the CPUTR and BPMR are not contravened. Furthermore, whilst it is clearly not possible to guarantee absolutely the outturn volume under all circumstances, manufacturers should ensure that the volume at outturn of packed products when determined within a period of 3 months from the time of filling (or whatever the likely interval between packaging and sale to end-user is known to be), is normally within 5% of the declared volume and that any shortfall does not exceed 10%.
- 1.4 Manufacturers must at all times also conform to all other relevant packaging regulations such as the Weights and Measures (Packaged Goods) Regulations 2006. Guidance can be found at <http://www.nwml.gov.uk/Docs/Latest%20News/PGR%20guidance%2013%20august%202007.pdf>

## **2. SAMPLING AND QUANTITY MEASUREMENT**

- 2.1 Sampling and quantity measurement shall be carried out in accordance with the relevant British Standards as identified below.
- 2.1.1 Sampling shall be undertaken in accordance with BS EN 12579:2000 Soil Improvers and Growing Media – Sampling. Prior to testing, the sampled material shall be thoroughly loosened taking account, where appropriate, of any specific manufacturer’s instructions.
- 2.1.2 Volume measurement shall be undertaken in accordance with BS EN 12580:2000 “Soil Improvers and Growing Media – Determination of a Quantity”.
- 2.2 It is permissible for other methods of volume determination to be used for quality control purposes at the factory. These are acceptable provided i) that the declared pack or bulk volume at the time of filling or outturn is expressed as if determined by BS EN 12580, as this is the only legal basis for such declarations and ii) that it can be demonstrated that the alternative method has been calibrated against the British Standard method and gives comparable results.
- 2.3 The sampling and quantity determination methods listed in 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 may not apply where a contract is in place and quantity determination by an alternative method has been agreed between a GMA member and a specific customer.

## **3. VOLUME DECLARATION**

- 3.1 There is no legal requirement to declare the quantity on any pack of growing media or soil improver. However, if quantity is stated it must appear in the following volumetric form:
- ‘x litres’ or ‘x L’.
- 3.2 Producers may also use the term ‘when filled’ in conjunction with the volume declaration, although the use of this phrase does not absolve the manufacturer from fairly representing the quantity of packed material determined at outturn, as noted in paragraph 1.3.
- 3.2.1 In the context of this Code of Practice, ‘when filled’ is the point at which the product is placed into the bag or pack. In the case of products delivered in bulk (loose in lorry), ‘when filled’ is the point at which the loose material is placed in the vehicle.
- 3.2.2 Where used, the words ‘when filled’ must be given equal prominence to the statement of volume.
- 3.3 When one or both of the above statements are used they may be accompanied by the following statement:

‘This pack has been filled in accordance with the ‘Growing Media Association Code of Practice for Quantity Measurement, Pack Filling and Volume Declaration’, available from [www.growingmedia.co.uk](http://www.growingmedia.co.uk).’

#### 4. **RECORD KEEPING**

4.1 Producers must make and keep records of quantity measurements during all production runs and keep these records for a minimum of 2 years.

4.2 In particular, records must be made available for regular inspection by agents of the GMA and at the request of Trading Standards Officers or other inspectors, to confirm that:

i) any material from an identifiable batch was subject to the minimum requirement of the Code.

ii) when sampling during packing has shown an underfill to have occurred, proper procedures have been employed to identify and quarantine non-conforming goods prior to re-testing for approval, re-packing or re-labelling.

iii) volume outturn checks have been carried out on packs stored for periods corresponding to those known to be likely, and are within the limits set by paragraph 1.3 above.

#### 5. **DEFINITIONS**

5.1 In the context of this Code of Practice the following definitions apply:

5.1.1 A Growing Medium is a material, other than soil *in situ*, in which plants are grown (usually in pots and containers). In the UK some people still use the term 'compost' in the same context.

5.1.2 A Soil Improver is a material added to soil *in situ* primarily to maintain or improve its physical properties, and which may improve its chemical and/or biological properties or activity. Another term for this is 'soil conditioner'. The term 'soil improver' in the UK also includes materials used as surface mulches such as bark, used to prevent weed growth and to conserve soil moisture.

#### 6. **COMPLIANCE**

6.1 Compliance with this Code of Practice by GMA members will be independently checked, a minimum of once every three years, during either the BOPP Growing Media Standard Audit or the Baseline Standard for Growing Media Association Standard Audit.

6.2 The procedure for dealing with non-compliance is set out in both the relevant Standards as set out in 6.1

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