

Australian Standard™

**Soils for landscaping and garden use**

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This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee CS-037, Garden Soils and Potting Mixes. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 4 August 2003 and published on 5 September 2003.

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- Agriculture Victoria
- Australian Institute of Horticulture
- Australian Society of Soil Science Incorporated
- Certification Bodies (Australia)
- NSW Agriculture
- NSW Department of Public Works and Services
- Nursery & Garden Industry Australia
- TAFE NSW
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Australian Standard™

**Soils for landscaping and garden use**

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## PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee CS-037, Garden Soils and Potting Mixes to supersede AS 4419—1998, *Soils for landscaping and garden use*.

Changes made in this edition include refinements of the toxicity test, and marking has changed to include bold line bordering around the health warnings for prominence on the bag or other documentation.

The terms ‘normative’ and ‘informative’ have been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which they apply. A ‘normative’ appendix is an integral part of a Standard, whereas an ‘informative’ appendix is only for information and guidance.

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## FOREWORD

Due to the complexities of soil science, the large number of different soil types that occur in nature and the fact that many soils now sold for use in landscapes and gardens are blends of organic and mineral components, soils that meet the general requirements of this Standard fall within a fairly wide range of properties.

Some plants have a distinct preference for soils with particular properties, therefore the appropriate soil should be carefully selected if optimum results are desired. Consequently, additional information on the suitability of soils with various properties for particular situations is provided. When in doubt, the consumer should seek specialist advice. In many cases the addition of fertilizer will also be necessary to achieve satisfactory results.

As consumers may be confused by the various terms for soils of different types, this Standard defines the major types and gives information on soil selection and use in an Appendix.

Products complying with AS 4454, *Compost, soil conditioners and mulches*, and soils complying with this Standard must meet the chemical contaminants criteria for unrestricted use, therefore the use of composts complying with AS 4454 as ingredients in landscaping soil blends will ensure that chemical contaminants levels are not unacceptably high in soils.

## STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

### Australian Standard Soils for landscaping and garden use

#### 1 SCOPE

This Standard sets out requirements for general purpose soils, top dressing, topsoil and landscaping mixes, for domestic and commercial use, supplied in either bulk or bagged lots.

##### NOTES:

- 1 The requirements of this Standard specify soils suitable for the vast majority of plants but do not cover soils for plants with special requirements, cricket pitch soils, other specialist sporting turf soils, on-site soils or fertilizers.
- 2 Requirements for potting mixes are specified in AS 3743.
- 3 It is often assumed that the darker the soil the better the quality. As this is not always the case, this specification does not specify colour requirements for soils.
- 4 Guidelines for taking soil samples are given in Appendix A.
- 5 Information on selection and use of soils is given in Appendix L.

#### 2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Standard is to provide manufacturers with a set of requirements which will ensure that soils can culture and maintain plant growth and to give users, such as growers, landscape architects and consumers, a surmise of the suitability and quality of soils.

#### 3 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

##### AS

- 1289 Methods of testing soils for engineering purposes  
 1289.2.1.1 Method 2.1.1 Soil moisture content tests—Determination of the moisture content of a soil—Oven drying method (standard method)  
 1289.4.1.1 Method 4.1.1: Soil chemical tests—Determination of the organic matter content of a soil—Normal method

3743 Potting mixes

##### AS/NZS

- 1336 Recommended practices for occupational eye protection  
 1715 Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices  
 1716 Respiratory protective devices  
 2161 Occupational protective gloves  
 2161.2 Part 2: General requirements

#### 4 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Standard the definitions below apply.

##### 4.1 General purpose soil

A material consisting of natural soil, amended natural soil, a blend of sand and organic materials or a blend of sand, natural soil materials and organic materials, which is suitable