

BARSOLE

Richard A. Ashley
Extension Vegetable Specialist

Barsola is a composted bark and poultry manure product tested as a component in growing media for bedding plants and geraniums. Trials were conducted in greenhouses at the University of Connecticut Agronomy Research Farm to compare Barsola and peat when used in combination with shredded styrofoam, vermiculite or soil and sand.

Mixes of peat and vermiculite or peat and shredded styrofoam were prepared in a 1:1 ratio and amended with 12 lbs. of ground limestones, 3 lbs. superphosphate, and 5 lbs. of 5-10-10 per cubic yard. Mixes of soil, sand and peat; soil, sand and Barsola; and Barsola, sand and peat were prepared on a 3:1:1 ratio and were amended according to soil test results. Mixes containing Barsola and vermiculite in ratios of 1:1, 1:2 and 2:1 and Barsola and shredded styrofoam in a 1:1 ratio were prepared by simply mixing the desired proportions of components. No other amendments were necessary.

On December 5, 1972, six 4-inch plastic pots were filled with each mix and planted with rooted geranium cuttings. Pots were placed in a glass greenhouse at 60°F night temperature. The third week after transplanting and each week thereafter, pots were fed with soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer at a rate of 1 lb. in 50 gallons.

On February 13, 1973, plants were evaluated and data taken as to the height, number of major breaks, number of flowers and average leaf diameter of each plant (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparisons of Barsola and peat as components of greenhouse growing media for geraniums, average of six replications.*

Mix	Ave. Height Inches	Number Branches Over 1"	No. of Fls.	Ave. Leaf Dia. Inches
Peat:styrofoam	14.5	1	2	4.9
Barsola:styrofoam	12.7	1	1	4.6
Peat:vermiculite 1:1	12.7	1.7	0	4.6
Barsola:vermiculite 1:1	13.7	1.3	0	4.8
Barsola:vermiculite 1:2	13.5	1	1	4.4
Barsola:vermiculite 2:1	12.5	1.3	0	4.9
Soil:sand:peat	13.2	1	2	4.5
Soil:sand:Barsola	13.3	1	1	4.9
Barsola:sand:peat	14.0	1	2	4.8
Barsola	14.6	1	2	4.9

*This data indicates no significant difference due to treatment.

Peat-vermiculite, Barsola-vermiculite 1:1 or 2:1 resulted in somewhat more breaks but delayed flowering. Otherwise, little difference was noted between any of the mixes tested.

Barsola can be used successfully to replace peat in growing media for short-term crops such as bedding plants and geraniums. When used with inert materials (i.e. styrofoam, sand (or perlite) or with vermiculite, no adjustment in nutrient levels or pH is required. The resulting mix will have a pH near 7.0, however, which may make it unsuitable for some crops.