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IX. POINSETTIA
by Robert Fitzgerald

Soil for Stock Plants

To get maximum production of quality cuttings from your stock plants, it is important to use a soil that is well-drained, well-aerated and has a good capacity for holding moisture. Field soil can be improved by incorporating 1 part coarse concrete sand, 1 part coarse peat moss to 2 -3 parts soil. A 2 inch layer of trap rock or other coarse material in the bottom of the container will help to improve drainage.

X. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER SOIL TESTING
by H. Thurston Handley Jr.

Always test your soil before planting a flower crop in it. This is a free service of our Field Station at Waltham. But whether you test a new soil or test to check on the soil of a growing crop, remember that an accurate sample is essential to give accurate results. The following data is of interest in this regard: "In a student project at the University of Rhode Island, a simple statistical study of soil sampling in a 20' X 4' greenhouse bench was made. The results in the following table show that when two spots in the bench were sampled randomly, more than a 100% error resulted.

In other words with a salt index reading of 100 (High fertility but not dangerous for many crops) the true average for the bench could have been higher than 200, which we would normally consider to be dangerously high. By including in the sample soil from four spots in the bench, the expected error was reduced to about 40%. Taking soil from eight spots reduced it to about 12%. Beyond eight spots, the error was further reduced very slowly. "

| <u>No. of Spots in Bench Sampled</u> | | <u>Error %</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 2 | more than | 100% |
| 3 | | 70% |
| 4 | | 41% |
| 5 | | 30% |
| 6 | | 22% |
| 8 | | 12% |
| 10 | | 10% |
| 20 | | 8% |

Your greenhouse bench will probably not behave in exactly the same way, but general principle will still be true. This is why we recommend that each sample you send in should include soil from at least six to ten spots within the bench or bed area you are sampling.