

Campaign to stop using peat in our gardens

In 2021 GFFOE began a campaign to persuade people to choose peat-free composts for their gardening needs.

Why?

Climate change: Protecting and restoring peatlands is vital to slowing and mitigating climate change:

- 1. Peat stores carbon** more effectively than trees
 - a. the UK's peatlands store over three billion tons of carbon, that is 3 times as much carbon as the UK's trees, and around the same as all the forests in the UK, France and Germany together.
 - b. Globally, peatlands cover just 3% of land area but store 30% of all soil carbon.
 - c. Policy failure to stop peat extraction has caused up to 31 million tonnes of CO₂ to be released since 1990 (see more about the devastating effect of peat extraction for horticulture here [on the Wildlife Trust website](#))
- 2. 80% of Britain's peatlands are damaged and need restoration** not further exploitation:



Eroded peat



Slowing runoff to restore peatland

- a. Peat is not quickly renewable – it evolves very slowly, accumulating on average only 1mm a year - taking 1,000 years for one metre of peat to form.
 - b. Only 13% of our peatlands are in a near-natural state. So, due to damage and degradation, our peatlands are emitting 10m tonnes of CO₂ per year in England.
- 3. Healthy peatlands help provide clean water**- they naturally filter our drinking water – reducing the use of chemicals and keeping down the costs of water treatment. 70% of our drinking water comes from upland moors dominated by peat. But the same is not true of



damaged peatlands, so water companies have to pay for costly chemicals to treat the water before sending it to our taps.

4. Peatlands help to prevent flooding by absorbing and holding rainfall in the uplands preventing rapid run off and flooding downstream

5. Peatlands are unique habitats for wildlife and are home to many species of wildlife including insects, plants and some of the UK's rarest and endangered species such as Curlew.



(A curlew standing in a peat bog -by Damian Waters)

Current situation

The Government plans to ban the sale of peat in compost by 2024 but the Wildlife Trusts argue that it needs to be stopped now:

“Waiting another two years until 2024 to ban peat use could add more than 1.5 million tonnes of CO2 to our atmosphere – roughly equivalent to the annual greenhouse gas emissions of more than 214,000 UK residents”

You can read more about the February 2022 report from the Wildlife Trusts [here](#)

GFFOE's campaign

Our primary focus is to **Raise public awareness** of:

1. why they should choose peat free compost, and plants grown in a peat-free medium;
2. how to recognise peat-free compost (labelling; what's in it etc.)
3. where to buy peat free compost;
4. how to use peat free compost (sources of advice)

To this end we have collected and compiled **leaflets and posters** covering these topics to use on our stalls. You can download them using the links below.

We have also compiled references to other useful websites which provide **information and advice**:

Leaflets about why:

- IUCN leaflet: <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/peatlands-and-climate-change>

- GFFOE's two x A4 Leaflet about "Why Choose Peat-Free Compost?", including "Useful tips on how to use peat-free compost" and "Where to buy it in Gosport and Fareham" [Download it here](#)

Posters –

These show examples of peat-free compost available locally (2xA4 landscape).



Further information about how to use peat free composts see:

Which? - if you are a member of 'Which?' you can log on to their site to find which are the best composts for sowing seeds, raising young plants and growing plants in containers.

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/compost/article/best-compost-ahUv44C6lrR5#best-peatfree-compost-for-sowing-seeds-Which?>

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has really good advice on using peat-free compost and making your own: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/soil-composts-mulches/peat-free> and you don't have to be a member to access it!

The Wildlife Trusts offer more tips for going peat-free on their page about '[How to go peat free at home](#)'

Ways you can help and things you can do:

- ❖ Only buy peat-free,
- ❖ Spread the word in any way you can including social media, chatting over the fence and sharing information with friends, fellow shoppers ...
- ❖ Ask local retailers and garden centres to stock it and praise them when they do.
- ❖ Let us know if any organisation you know would like a talk about it or could host a display about it.
- ❖ Write a letter to the press.

- ❖ [Sign the Wildlife Trusts' petition](#), to the Minister of Environment, and Minister for International Environment & Climate, to act at once to progress a ban on peat-based products in shops.
- ❖ Take the [Wildlife Trust's Quiz](#) and test your knowledge about peat!

❖ Join us at GFFOE!

Text – S. Hiron. May 2022

Pictures – from Wildlife Trust; except for poster compilation of examples of peat-free composts.