

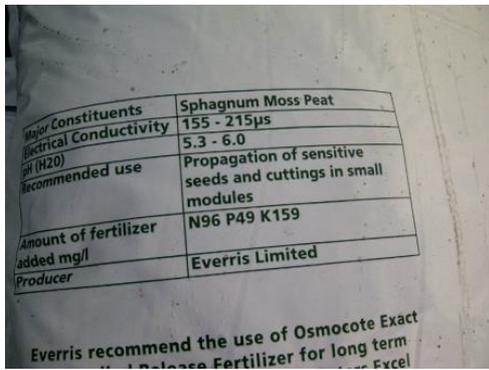
**19<sup>th</sup> January**

Well it's been another wet week here in the Central belt of Scotland – however although I have never seen my plot so wet we have been lucky that we are not suffering like the south of England.

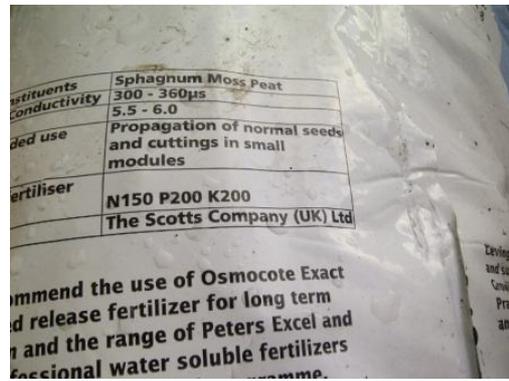
Tuesday saw the peat and compost delivered to me. The price now of peat and some of the specialist composts have been hiked up dramatically in the last couple of years, however I am convinced that if you don't use the right stuff, and stuff you can work with, you are starting an uphill struggle from day 1. You really should be planning what you are going to use – even for your small local show it's no use just thinking" I have carrots to sow, onions to pot up etc so I will just get some compost from the garden centre. The composts I use have been the ones that have stood me in good stead over the last 5 or 6 years – so I am reluctant to change. However I do experiment from time to time with others just to see if I can achieve better results – however so far nothing has bettered what I am using.

My main composts are Everris (Levington) brands, particularly F1, which I have been using for my long and stump carrots with good success. This year will be really interesting as around about Spring last year Everris changed the make up of the compost with a percentage of non peat materials added. However the biggest change was in the NPK ratio that they are now using. The difference between the old formula F1 (and F2 if you use it) is fairly substantial. The pictures show the new F1 NPK and the old F2 NPK. The new F2 NPK is N144 P73 K239 (these are milligrams per litre added). In F1 the Nitrogen and Potash is roughly similar to the old, but the Phosphates are almost two thirds less- as is the F2. I don't know of many people who used the "new" stuff last year so 2014 will be a year to watch with interest. I gave a talk at Medwyns seminar in November and he hadn't heard of this. However on the Monday after the seminar I had a conversation with the Technical Director of Everris who confirmed this was the case. His remedy was to use their Peters Professional feeds (the high phosphate one) as a foliar feed. I am not 100% convinced that foliar feeding is the best way or the answer so I will be adding superphosphates to my F1 mix this year. I probably will try a few barrels with the foliar feed as well to see how it works.





F1



F2

For a multi purpose compost I have been using Mother Earth for a few years for most other stuff with good results.



I wouldn't consider myself an expert potato grower although I have won the Scottish on one occasion and had a few 3rds. A third up here is like a win to me as you are always looking at Alistair Gray and Joe Proudlock filling the first 2 places!! This year I am doing a small number of bags in the traditional peat mix, with the bulk of them being in Iain Barbour from JBA potatoes potato compost. Iain should have this available shortly so if anybody is interested drop him an Email. I normally use Shamrock peat but the price of it this year is nearer gold prices, so I have reverted to using Clover peat. I was up at Alistair Gray's last week and Alistair is also using this so I am on the right track!!



The last thing I have been doing this week is to empty and refill the parsnip barrels. I only have 6 out of 30 to do but my back is telling me to leave them for a few days. Once they are done it's on to the long carrot barrels and stump beds. This must be the hardest and most soul destroying job growing long roots – but if you don't do it each year you won't get the results. My parsnip barrels were rock solid when they were emptied even though they were done last year. They are not normally like this but I am putting it down to the heat we had last year which resulted in me watering far more than normal with the results that the barrels basically hardened and almost cooked!



The 250g onions are ready to be pricked out and this will be done tomorrow. The pots are already filled with a mix of Mother Earth compost, Perlite and some Biochar from Mick Poultney – so that should be an easier job on the back!!