

Homemade Potting Soil Recipe

<http://www.theprairiehomestead.com/2015/04/homemade-potting-soil-recipe.html>

Thankfully, homemade potting soil is pretty darn easy to throw together. And it'll save you some \$\$ too.



Why These Ingredients for Potting Mix?

Truthfully, mixing your own potting soil isn't rocket science, and there are plenty of ways to make it happen. A good potting mix will:

- Be firm enough to support the plant
- Be light enough to allow air/water to flow with minimal compaction
- Be free of weed seeds and potential pathogens

But here is why I chose the ingredients I did:



Coconut Coir: Many DIY potting mix recipes call for peat moss, but since there is so much [debate regarding mining from peat bogs](#), I decided to steer clear of it and opt for coir instead. Coconut coir is a by-product of the coconut-processing industry, and is basically ground-up coconut husk fibers. It is a fantastic choice for soil-less potting mix, as it retains water beautifully. I got mine in a big brick, and had to soak it in water before it was ready to use. You can substitute it 1:1 for peat moss in potting soil recipes



Perlite: Perlite is a lightweight volcanic rock. It holds water and helps to aerate the soil and keep it from compacting. Some people also use vermiculite or plain ol' coarse sand in place of perlite in homemade potting soil recipes, too.



Compost: Well, you know what compost is, so I really don't have to explain this one. Compost adds nutrients to the soil and it's usually pretty much free if you make it at home yourself. *Just make sure to use finished compost* to avoid "burning" your plants or introducing weed seeds into your pots. Also, I used the finest compost I could find in my pile— you may need to sift yours if you have chunky stuff. Worm castings are another great option here.

What about Dirt?

Sorry... I meant to say soil. *(I always get at least one reader correcting me when I call it*

dirt instead of soil.) □ You can absolutely use regular ol' soil in your potting mix, and many folks do. However, it's advised to sterilize the soil first, to eliminate weeds and potential pathogens. This can be accomplished by baking the soil at 200 degrees in your oven.

Why didn't I do this? Because I could only imagine the mess I'd make trying to bake 10 gallons of dirt *(er... soil)* inside my kitchen... It just didn't sound like fun, so I opted for coconut coir instead. Also— using straight soil in your pots can open you up to issues with compaction. So, even if you **do** decide to use sterilized soil, make sure to add some sand or other lightener in there, too.

Homemade Potting Soil Recipe

- 2 parts* coconut coir
- 1 part finished, sifted compost
- 1 part perlite

**a "part" can be anything you like— a measuring cup, a coffee can, a five-gallon bucket, etc. It just depends on how much potting soil you want to make.*



If your coir came in a block, you'll need to hydrate it.

I did this by allowing the coir "brick" to sit in water until I was able to break it apart. I then added more water until it was easy to flake apart in my hands and very moist.



Next, mix the coir and compost. Add more water if you need too - I found it much easier to handle/mix if the mixture was damp.



Add in the perlite, give it a stir, and you're ready to go!

Use your DIY potting mix like you would store-bought mix.

DIY Potting Soil Notes:

- Keep in mind this recipe is super flexible and lends itself well to substitutions. In some of the other recipes I've seen, people substituted sterilized soil or peat moss for the coconut coir, vermiculite or coarse sand for the perlite, and all sorts of different fertilizers (kelp meal, bone meal, blood meal, worm castings) for the compost.
- This stuff is mucho easier to mix if it's damp.
- How does it compare in price? I paid \$15.96 for an 11-lb brick of coconut coir in Amazon and \$16.70 for a bag (18-quarts) of perlite. My local garden stores are pretty dismal when it comes to specialty ingredients, so it was unlikely I could have found those things here. The compost was free. Considering I only used a fraction of my ingredients for my first batch, they should last me for a while... And if you substituted coarse sand or sterilized soil, it would be even cheaper.