

## About

Situated in the heart of Hampshire's beautiful Test Valley, Pococks Roses is dedicated to growing nothing but roses for the garden. Established in 1984, they grow 100,000 roses annually for the retail trade, mail order and independent garden centres and nurseries throughout the UK.

Production is initially field based where roses are grown on open ground and are later lifted and sold either bare rooted or potted and up for sale between March and October. Pococks also grow a range of miniature roses from cuttings which are sold in 1 litre pots.

Pocock's started their peat free growing media journey approximately 10 years ago.



### Q1

#### When did you change to peat free and why?

We changed to peat free approximately 10 years ago, as we responded to pressure from some of our customers (retail) and we were becoming increasingly concerned about being forced to change so decided to jump rather than being pushed!

### Q2

#### How are you finding growing in peat-free and what issues have you experienced?

We seem to have new issues every year particularly with the watering, mostly we find that the peat free growing media is free draining, so we do have to water more, but we have noticed that as the season goes on it becomes less free draining, so watering is one of the key elements to get right when growing in peat-free. Previously when using peat-based growing media, we grew our roses on capillary matting but have found that this is detrimental to the plants in peat free.

### Q3

#### How have things changed or improved since switching to peat-free?

We have seen an increase of our customers questioning our environmental credentials particularly peat use. Some plant centres will no longer stock plants that are grown in peat based growing media. So being able to say that we are peat free and have been for a number of years has advantages and been worth the switch.

“Melcourt have been the leader in innovation and high quality for nearly four decades and has developed a range of products that is second to none. With unparalleled technical back-up, prompt and efficient delivery, outstanding levels of customer care and all-importantly, excellent environmental sustainability”



### Q4

#### What is your style of growing in peat free mixes?

Most of our potting is bare rooted straight into 5 litre containers, by hand! The roses are grown outside and mostly go onto aluminium benches with just grid under the pots. As the compost is free draining we experience leeching so feeding is another key element throughout the season.

### Q5

#### What sort of fertiliser do you use in your peat-free mix?

The growing media is supplied with Osmocote, as the season progresses we topdress with DCM fertiliser usually twice in the season and from July onwards we liquid feed usually every 10 days with Hortifeeds products.

### Q6

#### We know that peat-free substrate is more expensive than non-peat free substrate, have you saved in other areas?

We have cut down on the initial inclusion of fertiliser which has helped costs and we are now producing a better quality plant which has resulted in better sales and less wastage at the end of the season.

### Q7

#### What are your top-3 tips for peat free success?

Pay careful attention to watering, feed well and don't let your guard down!