

FARMER TO FARMER - SHARING ORGANIC PRACTICES

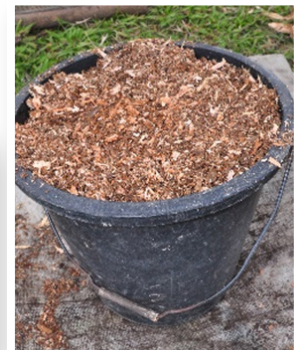
COOKING (STERILISING) SOIL FOR NURSERIES

Good potting soil is crucial to ensure the optimal growth and health of plants and the success of the nursery. Sterilising potting soil by steaming it kills pests and diseases thriving in the soil. Potting mixes can be sterilised in an oven, or steamer. Organic youth farmers of Napil Rural Training Centre in Middle Bush on Tanna Island in Vanuatu, use the fireplace and a recycled drum¹.

They also make their own potting mix, one part of grated rotting wood and two parts of compost.

Step 1

Place wire mesh over a bucket. Grate woody material into tiny pieces.



Step 2

Break down compost using wire mesh.



Step 3

Compost

Rotting Wood



¹It is important to note that not all organic standards accept soil sterilisation for soil including for nursery use. Others require the drum used to have not been previously used for non-allowable inputs. Farmers must check with their certifier to confirm if this practice is allowed.

Place grated woody material onto a sack. Add grated compost. Mix well by hand. The mixture ratio is 1 part rotten wood to 2 parts of compost.

Step 4
Get fire ready



Step 5

Place half of a drum over the fireplace. Three pieces of concrete or rocks is placed inside the drum to form a stand. Water is poured in to create a steaming effect when boiled. A drum lid is then placed on top of the concrete pieces, suspended over the steaming water. The potting mix is placed on top of the drum lid and lightly watered.



Step 6

A root of the manioc (cassava) plant is inserted into the soil in the middle to serve as a temperature gauge. Other tubers like xanto soma taro and sweet potatoes can be as good substitutes for a thermometer that farmers cannot easily access because of their isolation from the urban centres. Leaves are placed over the soil to cover it during cooking.



Step 7

When the cassava is cooked, the potting mix is ready. Remove drum from the fireplace and cool the potting mix overnight before using to plant seeds.

This information sheet is produced in partnership with the youth of Napil Rural Training Center, Farm Support Association, the Sustainable Development Goals Fund, UNDP Pacific, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Pacific Community and the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community.



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