

Written by Luke

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HortLoam - British Sugar TOPSOIL's new BS3882:2015 compliant planting topsoil launched in June – has been chosen as the base planting medium for the new Global Growth Vegetable Garden at RHS Garden Hyde Hall in Chelmsford, Essex.

It has been mixed in a ratio two parts HortLoam with one part native clay and green waste compost to provide an open, friable and humus-rich medium ideal for growing vegetables from around the world.

The new garden, sponsored by Witan Investment Trust plc, which has enjoyed a long relationship with the RHS and helped develop several gardens at RHS Garden Wisley, has been designed by Suffolk-based garden and landscape designer XaTollemache. Her innovative circular layout for the garden is sectioned into four quarters with each representing a different continent: Europe and the Middle East, Asia, North and Central America, and South America.

British Sugar TOPSOIL has been working with the team at Hyde Hall to develop the perfect mix for the oak-framed planters that will contain the vegetables. In September, 360 tonnes of HortLoam were delivered to site in 13 tonne articulated lorries. The planters were first dug out to a depth of 900mm and then backfilled with 450mm of native clay soil. The top 450mm was filled with the HortLoam/native clay/compost mix and the beds rotavated to level them off and assist with blending and settlement. Planting of the vegetables will take place in the spring.

HortLoam contains coarse sand and additional reserves of organic matter in the form of BSI PAS 100 & CQP compliant 'green' compost, giving it a more open and free-draining structure. Its coarser texture is ideal for vegetable planting schemes of this kind and provides the optimum environment for establishing young plants and encouraging healthy root growth.

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Speaking about the choice of HortLoam for the Global Growth Vegetable Garden, Matthew Oliver the Horticulturist that will be looking after the garden said: "We need a soil that can provide a fine enough tilth for sowing a broad range of vegetable crops from year one. It takes a long time to get our existing clay into this condition so I am pleased that HortLoam, which is easy to work and mixes well with the existing soil, was chosen to get the garden off to a great start."

National TOPSOIL Manager Andy Spetch, who has been working on the Hyde Hall project, said: "British Sugar TOPSOIL is proud to be involved with this incredible scheme and we are very confident that HortLoam will do a great job and produce strong, healthy plants. It is the ultimate showcase to demonstrate the effectiveness of our latest product to the public and to the landscape industry and we are very grateful to the RHS and to Matthew Oliver for giving us this opportunity."

The Global Growth Vegetable Garden will open next summer and it is hoped that visitors, who will be able to taste the harvested produce in the garden's onsite restaurant, will be inspired to grow their own vegetables.