

Cranfield study establishes soil health benchmark for British Sugar TOPSOIL products

Written by Luke

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A year-long scientific study into the amount of soil microbiology in TOPSOIL products has resulted in data that will assist product development and help customers to understand more about the health of the soils they specify or use.

The study, which was overseen by Senior Research Fellow of Soil Biology at Cranfield University Dr Mark Pawlett, commenced in November 2021 and statistically analysed four samples each of TOPSOIL's Sports&Turf topdressing, Landscape20 general purpose topsoil, and HortLoam planting soil, taken at three-monthly intervals.

At each sampling, the total microbial biomass of each product was measured to assess whether the processes critical for nutrient cycling and resilience are supported by active soil microorganisms. In other words, is the topsoil component in TOPSOIL products a healthy, living organism making an entirely positive contribution to plant and turf establishment and growth?

Commenting on the data and final report, National TOPSOIL Manager Andy Spetch said:

"This Cranfield study, together with our ongoing carbon monitoring work and trials with the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), helps us provide our customers with as full a picture of each of our products as possible. This, in turn, allows landscape, grounds management, and sports turf professionals to make informed buying decisions based on objective, independent, scientific data and analysis. This data will also help us to develop and refine our products."

The Cranfield study concluded that HortLoam planting soil has the greatest microbial biomass overall, reflecting the PAS 100 greenwaste compost component of the product. The microbial biomass of Landscape20 general purpose topsoil is slightly reduced compared to Hortloam, and both have significantly higher microbial biomass than Sports&Turf, a sand-based topdressing

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with only 10 percent soil component.

The study data and report can be freely accessed on the TOPSOIL website. www.bstopsoil.co.uk