

# Working with topsoil – the landscaper's guide



This practical guide covers all the important factors in receiving, storing and using topsoil to ensure complete success in landscaping projects.

# Working with topsoil

## 1

### Site evaluation

- Evaluate the soils on the recipient site for potentially toxic elements\* and the site's drainage potential
- See CLEA model for further guidance

\* if contamination is present, use this evaluation to establish a remediation strategy

## 2

### Imported topsoil

- The topsoil you import must comply with BS3882:2007 in order to be fit for purpose
- A certificate of analysis will help you establish if the soil is a true topsoil or derived from screened demolition or skip waste
- Samples may not be representative – if in doubt, view the topsoil for yourself



#### **SAFETY**

Health & Safety signage must be set-up on the site before any work takes place and the site closed off to the public. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be worn at all times while working on the site.

# 3 Deliveries

- Check there are no site access restrictions for large trucks
- Use immediately or stockpile it on a high, clean, segregated area to reduce standing water. Cover with a large, secured waterproof sheet
- Small quantities should be laid on clean, strong, flat boards to ensure the soil is kept off the ground, minimising contamination





# 4 Preparation of the existing site

- Remove all contaminants, e.g. wood, concrete, bricks, tarmac etc
- Minimise pedestrian and vehicle traffic movement especially in wet conditions. If machinery and foot traffic has affected the site then it should be de-compacted to a depth of at least 300mm
- Perennial and evasive weeds such as couch grass or Japanese Knotweed must be controlled / removed in accordance with statutory requirements prior to soil application



# 5

## Planting & Turfing

- Avoid handling topsoil in wet conditions
- Planting area should be cultivated to at least 300mm depth for shrubs (200mm for turf) then levelled-off and consolidated with boards (these will spread the weight)
- Seeding requires only a light cultivation and then consolidation for good seed/soil contact
- For shrub and tree planting, loosen the bottom and sides of the hole to aerate and add new topsoil to aid root development (trees require a thicker layer)



- Backfill with topsoil once the plant is in position and heel-in firmly
- For turf repair on worn or sunken areas, lift the turf, build up the level with imported topsoil, replace the turf and consolidate with a board
- For shrub and tree planting, loosen the bottom and sides of the hole to aerate and add new topsoil to aid root development (trees may require a specialist tree soil)



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