



Section 3: Good Practice Guides

Landscaping / Horticultural Services

What is the issue?

Sustainable landscapes feature healthier, longer-life plants that rely less on chemical pesticides and fertilisers, minimise water use, and reduce waste generation and disposal. They also require less maintenance, and when managed properly can alleviate groundwater and air pollution problems.

The use, supply, storage and advertisement of pesticides are regulated by a number of pieces of legislation including the Control of Pesticides Regulations (COPR) and Plant Protection Products Regulations (PPPR). The use of pesticides is also regulated by COSHH (the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health).

Peat bogs are very important habitats which maintain many rare plants and wildlife and are a means of reducing the effects of flooding as they absorb and hold excess water. Peat bogs also act as 'carbon sinks,' capturing and storing carbon. When they are destroyed they release this carbon into the atmosphere, contributing to climate change.

Government Buying Standards

The [Government Buying Standards](#) specifications for horticulture services were published in March 2011. They take into account key environmental impacts from horticulture and park services and cover the following:

- Soil improvers
- Media products



Section 3: Good Practice Guides - Landscaping / Horticultural Services

- Invasive non-native species
- Hazardous substances
- Peat
- Organic ingredients
- Ornamental plants
- Irrigation systems
- Garden machinery

What else can be done?

- ✓ Only use peat for bedding plants or when a plant needs to be purchased from a specialist nursery or grower and the plant is only available grown in peat
- ✓ Do not use pesticides or herbicides unless essential and if so, give preference to non-residual pesticides that break down in contact with the soil
- ✓ If using pesticides or herbicides, ensure that they are managed and applied strictly in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations and following a COSHH assessment
- ✓ Give preference to native plant and tree species where possible and consider the need for adaptation to climate change
- ✓ Ensure that anyone, including contractors who should hold a Certificate of Competence as required by the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, involved in the specification and use of pesticides, has adequate training in their use – relevant certificates should be provided
- ✓ Avoid all pesticides on the UK Red list and the European Union Black list of hazardous substances
- ✓ Use natural weed control where possible such as cutting, mowing, manual weeding and applying mulches around plants to suppress weed growth
- ✓ Grass cycle turf areas by leaving grass clippings on the lawn which release valuable nutrients back into the soil. This will reduce water and fertilizer usage and green waste generation as well as maintenance costs
- ✓ Prune selectively to maintain natural growth patterns using natural pruning techniques in the proper season
- ✓ Reuse organic materials i.e. use prunings and clippings as mulch on the landscape and use on-site composting
- ✓ When purchasing mulches and composts, consider products with the highest recycled green waste content
- ✓ Retrofit inefficient landscapes - establish new landscape plantings with more low-maintenance and drought-tolerant plants

Source: adapted from <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Organics/landscaping/>



Section 3: Good Practice Guides - Landscaping / Horticultural Services

Case study 7 - Blackpool Council

In a recent tender for green space management of Blackpool Council Housing managed areas, the following clauses were included within the performance standard specification.

Green waste

“The Contractor shall be required within his Method Statements to submit proposals for recycling of green waste. This shall include chipping, shredding and/or composting of uncontaminated organic plant material such as horticultural debris, arisings from tree and shrub pruning, etc. Such work may be sub-contracted.

Re-use of such material within the Contract for horticultural purposes may be permitted at the discretion of the Authorised Officer, and suggestions should be included as part of the submitted Method Statements.”

Prevention of pollution

“Notwithstanding any legal requirements that may apply under the Control of Pollution Act, the Contractor shall have a general duty to take all reasonable precautions to avoid pollution of the atmosphere, watercourses, or land by the discharge or deposit of any solid, liquid or gaseous substance arising from their performance of the Services. The Contractor will be held liable for any damage so caused and the cost of removal or rendering harmless and any other necessary remedial treatment will be borne by the Contractor.”

Leaf clearance

“Leaves must be removed from grass areas before they start to rot, and should be composted if possible. The Tenderers’ views on composting, and how it is to be achieved or not, will be expected in the Method Statements.”

Case study 8 – St Helens Council

St Helens Council’s specification for bedding and tree/shrub supply contracts, recently renewed, contained several requirements related to green issues.

The tendering process required the companies in question to submit their environmental policies, which played an important role in evaluating the bids. Such issues included:

1. Peat reduction and evidence of trials of other products
2. Water consumption and supply
3. Recycling policies

Specification clauses included:

“St Helens Council promotes reusable and recyclable products through its purchasing policies and would wish to discuss proposals for the collection and re-use of co-extruded bags and containers with the successful tenderer.”

Section 3: Good Practice Guides - Landscaping / Horticultural Services

“St Helens council may award the contract to any supplier who currently uses composts which have a similar composition to the table below or who can demonstrate a willingness to work towards these goals.

Peat	Compost*	Bark	Magnesium limestone (dolodust)	Ammonium nitrate	Controlled release fertiliser
45%	33%	22%	0.5 g / l	0.5 g / l	4 g / l

A reduced peat compost mix containing a minimum of 55% recycled materials of which 33% is green waste compost.”

“If the successful tenderer is unable to meet these specifications, St Helens Council may wish to refer the company to Envirolink Northwest who will be able to provide the relevant technical data and chemical analysis and assist with any enquiries or concerns. Contact details: 01925 813 200, www.envirolinknorthwest.co.uk”

Further information

In April 2011, DEFRA issued a new code of practice on invasive plant species: [Helping to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species – Horticultural code of practice.](#)

WRAP has produced a detailed guidance document of compost specifications for the landscaping industry, including technical and general specification criteria to meet PAS 100:2005, minimum quality criteria for composted products:

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/downloads/CompostSpecificationsLandscapewithPAS1002005.df06fa17.285.pdf>

Guidance on alternatives to using peat:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerhomeandgarden/Greenergarden/DG_064415

Envirolink Northwest can provide advice on composts with recycled content which are available from North West suppliers. Contact buyrecycled@envirolinknorthwest.co.uk

Pesticide Action Network: www.pan-uk.org

Pesticides Safety Directorate: www.pesticides.gov.uk