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FAQ's On Super Absorbents

1. Can a super absorbent cause over watering? No. Over watering is caused by standing water in a root zone. Standing water is the result of lack of drainage. Drainage is based upon the particle size of the soil, mix, or gel that is considered the root zone. Super absorbents, especially when fully hydrated, are of a large particle size. In fact the swelling and shrinking action of a super absorbent between watering should "exercise" the mix and promote drainage. A super absorbent can actually improve drainage by allowing the grower to move to an extremely well drained mix, one he/she could not use without a super absorbent as an amendment. Remember, roots grow into the pore space between soil particles - so the more pore space, the more space for roots to grow. The problem with lots of pore space is that such a mix does not hold water. Think again. With a super absorbent it can hold as much water as you want! AND, roots will grow into a hydrated "nugget" of water!

2. How long have super absorbents been used in horticulture? Union Carbide Corporation first introduced superabsorbents to the horticultural markets back in the mid 60's. They were introduced into the retail gardening market. In the 70's the products could be found in only a handful of garden centers and were used very little by the commercial grower due to their low swell ability (about 30 times) and consequently high cost. In the early 80's super absorbents began to be developed with an eye towards the baby diaper market. The baby diaper market represented a potential of hundreds of millions of pounds. Soon newer, higher swell; super absorbents were developed for these markets which lead to refinements in products suitable for agriculture, which were also long lasting. The commercial market for super absorbents today in the US market alone exceeds \$10,000,000. All attempts at the retail market have resulted in little because no company will invest the necessary millions for promotion when there are little barriers to entry into these markets.

3. How long does a super absorbent last in the soil? Under most conditions a quality agricultural super absorbent will last 4-5 years which makes them very cost effective for long term maintenance situations. Baby diaper polymers last a couple of months in the soil and are sold commercially by several companies as "agricultural grade" super absorbents.

4. What is the purpose of having several different particle sizes of super absorbents? It's simply a physical thing. A small particle size is used for gel bare root dips. If you used a larger particle size it would become so heavy it would fall off of a root instead of coating the root. On the other hand a small particle size used as a soil amendment would be very difficult to mix and use since it would stick together with other small gel particles and be a mess.



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5. What is the most accepted use of a super absorbent? Bare root treatments that began back in the early 80's are the most accepted with landscape and nursery container mix amendments being tied for #2. The fastest growing application today is nursery/greenhouse mix amendment uses. In 2000 over ½ million pounds will be used in this application.

6. What ever happened to such and such? In the past 20 plus years there have been about 100 companies enter the market with a super absorbent product. Ninety five percent of them are gone.

The problem for the consumer is that a poor quality super absorbent looks the same as a quality agricultural grade super absorbent. The companies that sell these poor products damage the image of super absorbents unfairly. Forget trade names too. Trade name can be purchased and then used with different products. Unfortunately, as a consumer you must constantly check the quality of the super absorbent that you use until you are comfortable with the company from which the super absorbent is coming from. A successful company is only successful because the quality of its products has won it a place in the market. Sooner, or later, the poor company will go away. So stick with a winner - and you too will be a winner.

Horta-Sorb® super absorbents are unique. No other commercially available super absorbent is identical to the chemical makeup of our products that have been based upon over 20 years experience in determining what components provide the longest lasting super absorbent. Other companies marketing "me-too" products have no idea of the chemistry. They listen to manufacturers that have little knowledge of what actually happens in the real world.