



Cigarettes & Peat Moss

A Dangerous Mix

When it comes to prevention, most people don't realize how much a risk is posed by outdoor plants. There has recently been a noticeable increase of incidents of fires caused by dry peat moss in potting soil. Problems are also related to fertilizers in the soil, which can act as oxidizers that accelerate fires.

PEAT MOSS FIRES

- Over the last several years, fire departments have reported a higher-than-average number of fires caused by potting soil catching fire.
- This new trend of accidental fires has a root cause – careless disposal of smoking materials.
- Today, smoking is only permitted outdoors where there are often insufficient ashtrays or receptacles for cigarette butts. Consequently, smokers often “butt” out in any available container, such as a patio planter.



THE MORE YOU KNOW — POTTING MIXES UNEARTHED

- Potting soil poses such a fire risk, because it contains a high amount of inorganic material that may ignite easily.
- Many potting soils on the market today contain less dirt and more organic substances that are flammable, such as shredded wood, bark, peat moss, Styrofoam and vermiculite. These materials help absorb and retain water and aerate the soil.
- With an ignition temperature of 500 degrees Fahrenheit, dry peat moss provides a safe soil conditioner under most conditions. Fire occurs when an outside heat source make contact with the peat. A discarded cigarette butt generates temperatures in excess of 700 degrees Fahrenheit. Smokers should avoid discarding butts in planters.



EFFECTS

- *Home and apartment fires, which begin in planters can burn unnoticed for several hours. Peat smolders rather than bursting into flame and can burn down to the base of the container with no more than a thin smoke plume and pungent odor.*
- *Any flammable material near the container can help spread the fire. Decks and other wooden structures present a rich source of fuel.*



FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

- **Do not** use potted plants as an ashtray.
- **Always** keep potted plants well-watered.
- **Do not** keep potted plants near combustible material.
- **Use** clay planter pots whenever possible, as they may keep potting soil fires better contained.
- **REMEMBER**, fire safety is your personal responsibility... *Fire Stops with You!*

RAMSEY FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, MN 55303 | 763-427-4452