

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Sakata Goes Into the Potting Mix Business

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Seeing how you can't grow plants without potting soil (putting hydroponics aside, of course), perhaps it makes sense that Sakata Seed America has just announced a strategic alliance with Floragard Vertriebs, a 100-year-old German specialist in professional and hobbyist potting mixes and garden soils.

As always, the first question is "Why?"

It turns out Sakata and Floragard have a long history. Sakata has been distributing Floragard products in Japan under the Sakata label for 30 years. Sakata was looking for ways to "increase our intrinsic value to our customers," explained Senior Marketing Manager Alicia Suits, and potting mixes fit the bill.

Sakata will distribute Floragard products in the U.S. and Canada with the help of their 33-member sales and technical support team, from five facilities. The partnership will go under the name "Sakata Solutions." They'll use a different distribution model than their seed business, working both with distributors and directly with key growers. Product will come straight from Europe as well as through traditional hardgood distributors and Sakata's own strategically located facilities, which "will allow us to maintain an inventory of high volume SKU's to be very responsive to customer requests for trial materials and last minute orders," Alicia said.

The new initiative will be headed up by Joe Cimino (he'll retain his role as head of the ornamental division), reporting to Dave Armstrong, President and CEO of Sakata Seed America. **GT**