



# AWBS Choosing The Right Type Of Topsoil Guide

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## Topics covered

1. What is topsoil
2. Types of topsoil
3. The right soil types for your project
4. AWBS range of topsoils

## Introduction

There are different types of topsoil for use in various garden and landscaping applications. Within this guide, we'll explain the different kinds of topsoil, which soil types you should use for certain projects, and offer advice for when you buy topsoil. We'll also explain how you can improve the condition of your existing soil and the range of products available from AWBS.



## 1. What is topsoil?



Topsoil is the uppermost layer of soil, high in nutrients and organic matter. It has a wide range of uses – from making beds and borders, to a base for a lawn. It's used when there is no natural soil, or the quality of the existing soil is poor. **Good quality topsoils**, like those available from AWBS, should meet British Standards 3882:2007.

### When to use topsoil

Topsoil should be used anywhere the condition of the existing soil is poor. This is common in many gardens – new build houses, for example, have generally had the natural topsoil stripped away during the building process. Topsoil can provide vital nutrients, balance pH levels and help control moisture and evaporation rates.

New soil can also be used to fill raised beds or as a planting soil for pots, baskets, and planters. And good quality soil is ideal for vegetable or fruit growing, as it creates a wonderful rich ground, and offers a fertile and weed-free base for new turf or lawn seed.



## 2. Types of topsoil

Topsoil comes in three different grades.

**Economy grade**, as the name suggests, is the cheapest type of topsoil. It's commonly used for projects requiring volume over quality. If sourced from a reputable supplier, it should be screened to remove debris but will generally contain small stones. Economy grade soil is primarily used for levelling, backfilling, and landscaping.

**General-purpose grade** is good for creating new borders and beds, a base for a new lawn and, when mixed with sand, as a lawn top dressing soil.

**Premium grade** is high in fertility and should not bring in weed seeds. It has good structure and is commonly used for building up borders, growing fruit and vegetables, creating new flower beds and in compost mixes for pot plants.



### 3. The right soil types for your project

The types of soil you use will vary depending on your garden project.

#### Soil for planting and flower beds



General purpose or premium grade topsoil should be used for flowerbeds. For most, a general-purpose grade will be fine, as long as it is of good quality, screened to 10mm and contains a mixture of recycled soil and organic composts. Our AWBS Planting or AWBS Blended Loam topsoils are ideal for beds and borders.

For more delicate plants, you should consider using a finer, premium grade planting and potting soil that contains additional fertilisers.

When creating a raised bed, you could fill it with economy grade topsoil, with a top layer of premium, such as AWBS Premium topsoil. The depth of this layer depends on the kind of plants you want to grow but should be a minimum of 20cm



## Soil for vegetables



To create a rich ground, full of nutrients for growing vegetables or fruit, you should use a premium grade topsoil. Soil for vegetables and fruit will usually be screened to 10mm and made up of 50% recycled soil and 50% green waste compost. It will also contain small stones for drainage. AWBS Premium topsoil is perfect for growing all kinds of vegetables and fruits.



## Topsoil for new turf and grass seed



General purpose grade topsoil should be used for laying turf. It should be screened to 10mm, with a mixture of recycled soil, green waste compost, sand and small stones for drainage. Rolawn Turf & Lawn Seeding topsoil is also blended with fertiliser to help establish the lawn and promote healthy growth.



## Lawn top dressing soil



For laying lawns and grass seed, a premium soil should be used, such as AWBS Premium topsoil or Rolawn Topdressing Topsoil. Lawn topsoil should be a mixture of premium grade soil and sands, with nutrients and fertilisers to promote healthy lawn growth. A good lawn top dressing will stimulate new grass growth, create a level surface and improve drainage.



## Soil for landscaping



General purpose and economy grade are both suitable landscaping soils. A recycled 10mm screened economy grade topsoil, such as the AWBS Value soil, can be used for levelling, landscaping and filling large areas. You should use a general-purpose soil as a top layer in any areas that will be used for planting or laying turf.



## 4. AWBS range of topsoils

At AWBS, we have a **large selection** of economy, general purpose and premium grade topsoils. You can be confident that all our soils are ethically sourced in the UK and of exceptional quality. All comply with British Standard BS3882:2007, except for AWBS Blended Loam, which is a mix of quality soil and organic material and complies to BSI PAS 100, which is the British Standard for compost. We also stock a wide range of soils from leading UK turf and topsoil suppliers, Rolawn.

AWBS Value Soil is a **general-purpose grade soil**, which is screened to 10mm and an ideal levelling, filling, and landscaping soil for large areas. As part of our Eco Range, it has been carefully sourced from greenfield sites.

AWBS **Blended Loam** is our most popular type of general-purpose grade topsoil and is perfect for growing, planting, raised beds, levelling and as a base layer for turf. It's screened to 10mm and contains recycled soil and organic matter for compost, with small stones for drainage.

AWBS **Planting topsoil** is a high quality, 20mm screened with a ph of 7.5 to 8.2, this sandy loam soil is ideal for turfing and planting beds, borders, trees and shrubs. It's also great for growing vegetables.

AWBS Premium topsoil is a **premium grade, sandy topsoil**, with a high organic content. Screened to 8mm, this fine soil is perfect for lawn top dressing or games pitch renovation, due to being free draining with minimum stones. It's also suitable for most planting applications, growing fruit and veg and for rejuvenating tiered flower beds and borders.



## Improving your existing soil

When soil quality is poor, **soil improvers** or conditioners can help, particularly helpful when growing vegetables, fruit trees and decorative plants. With a mixture of high-quality, peat-free soils and shredded straw compost with iron minerals, soil improvers are exceptionally fertile and will improve the condition and structure of the existing soil.

Dig over existing soil, removing all weeds and stones, then add a multi-purpose compost, such as AWBS Multi-Purpose Compost or **Rolawn Soil Improver**. Both are perfect for rejuvenating flowerbeds and creating a rich environment for growing vegetables and fruit.

## Where to buy topsoil

Garden centres, building and **landscaping merchants and soil specialists** will all sell topsoil, but always ensure it's of the highest quality. Reputable companies should only supply soils that are tested, traceable and comply with British Standard BS3882:2007.

All types of topsoil are usually sold in bulk bags, or in cubic metres. AWBS bulk bags contain 0.73m<sup>2</sup> of soil, which can cover 15m<sup>2</sup>, at 50mm deep. For smaller projects, we also sell topsoil in half-bulk bags and small bags you can take away with you.

## Free topsoil delivery and advice from AWBS

Don't forget to factor in delivery costs when you buy topsoil in bulk bags. At AWBS we offer **FREE delivery on all topsoil**, compost and top-dressing soils within 25 miles of our Oxford, Yarnton and Swindon branches.

If you're still unsure on the right type of topsoil for your project, get in touch with us. Our expert staff will be able give you advice in any of our branches, or via telephone or email.



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