



# Bark mulch and bark humus

## THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT BARK PRODUCTS WITH THE RAL QUALITY MARK



### HOW CAN I TELL IF A BARK PRODUCT IS GOOD?

The **RAL quality mark "Substrates for plants"** identifies all-natural bark products that are continuously monitored by the independent organisation Gütegemeinschaft Substrate für Pflanzen e.V. This quality mark represents an independent and neutral certification of quality, making it easier to select reliable products - especially in municipal procurement processes.



### WHAT ARE BARK PRODUCTS?

At sawmill sites, the natural, renewable raw material bark is removed from tree trunks using state-of-the-art technology and then processed into bark mulch or bark humus.

Before processing the raw material undergoes a rotting process that decomposes any growth-inhibiting substances.

To make **bark mulch**, the raw bark is crushed and screened.

To make **bark humus**, fine bark is subjected to a longer, more specific rotting process.

Crush and screen raw bark from wood processing



**Bark mulch**  
(fine – medium – coarse)



Composting



**Bark humus**  
(with various particle sizes)



### DOMESTIC BARK OR MEDITERRANEAN PINE BARK?

**Domestic bark mainly comes from spruce and pine trees** and is often produced regionally. **Mediterranean pine bark, on the other hand, originates from pine species grown in southern Europe, e.g. Portugal, Spain, and France.** While Mediterranean pine bark is typically slightly more expensive, it is considered highly decorative and decomposes more slowly than domestic bark.



### THE RAL QUALITY MARK – A GUARANTEE OF CONTINUOUS, INDEPENDENT QUALITY CONTROL

The chemical, physical and biological properties of RAL-certified products are regularly **tested by approved independent laboratories and in-company experts.** A neutral panel of GGS specialists continuously monitors compliance with quality criteria and determines whether the RAL quality mark may be awarded.

## QUALITY CRITERIA FOR BARK MULCH

### PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

- Type of bark mulch (fine – medium – coarse)
- Particle size
- Woody parts
- Foreign matter

### CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

- Total nutrient content
- C/N ratio
- Pesticide residues
- Organic matter
- Heavy metal content

### BIOLOGICAL PROPERTIES

- Free from volatile plant-damaging substances

## QUALITY CRITERIA FOR BARK HUMUS

### PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

- Particle size
- Foreign matter

### CHEMICAL PROPERTIES

- pH value
- Salinity
- Total nutrient content
- Soluble nutrients
- Organic matter
- Heavy metal content

### BIOLOGICAL PROPERTIES

- Stable nitrogen content (ensured N stabilization)
- Free from growth-inhibiting substances
- Largely free of weeds



## REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE BARK MULCH

Apply an approximately 5 cm thick layer of RAL-certified bark mulch to weed-free areas, using a fine (0-20 mm), medium (10-40 mm) or coarse (10-80 mm) grade. Before mulching around shallow rooted plants (such as perennials), apply horn shavings (40-80 g/m<sup>2</sup>) to ensure adequate nitrogen supply.

#### Benefits of mulched flower beds and borders:

- Reduced watering needs, as the soil retains moisture longer
- Greatly reduced weed growth due to inhibited germination
- More stable soil temperatures, protecting the plants against extreme heat and cold
- Activated soil life and improved mineral supply for plants
- Effective protection against erosion caused by heavy rain or hail
- Visually appealing

#### Good to know:

Bark mulch naturally decomposes over time. In warm and humid conditions, fruiting bodies of wood-decay fungi may appear. This is completely normal and does not effect quality, while indicating a natural, chemical-free product. Studies have shown that using bark mulch does not lead to soil acidification.



## REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE BARK HUMUS

Apply a 0.5 – 1.0 cm thick layer of RAL-certified bark humus in early spring or during the growing season and work it lightly into the topsoil. When planting trees or shrubs, it is a good idea to mix in up to 30 % of bark humus (by volume) with the planting media. Bark humus is a valuable source of humus and nutrients, improving soil structure and fertility.



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