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### **NEW SUBSTRATES WILL REVOLUTIONISE GREEN ROOF DESIGN**

A unique range of substrates, designed specifically for green roofs, is to be launched by Boningale GreenSky at EcoBuild in March.

The four different types of substrate have been developed in conjunction with the University of Sheffield and will enable landscape architects to choose the ideal medium, according to geographical location, rainfall and maintenance required.

Maggie Fennell, Manager of Boningale GreenSky, the green roof department of Boningale Nurseries that was set up in partnership with the University of Sheffield Green Roof Centre, said the range will radically change the way in which landscape architects will be able to plan their green roofs.

The range was developed because there was nothing on the market that enabled designers and contractors to choose an appropriate substrate that could achieve a particular desired performance.

At the moment, substrate manufacturers class their products according to the type of planting they should be used with, for example, sedum matting, wildflowers or turf.

Such classification means that accompanying data factsheets are difficult to interpret if the products need to be compared to actual performance, which could lead to the wrong type being used.

This can result in poor plant performance and disappointing environmental results.

However, Boningale GreenSky, with the Animal and Plant Science department at University of Sheffield, has created four different categories of substrate to suit different situations:

- Dry location, fast-growing plants
- Dry location, low maintenance planting
- High rainfall area, fast-growing plants
- High rainfall area, low maintenance planting.

The PhD research led by Gareth Phoenix discovered that the amount of rainfall that an area experiences and the level of maintenance expected for the finished design are the two main factors to consider when choosing the correct substrate.

Maggie explained that these indicators were used in the creation of the SkySuperstrate range so that each had the correct balance of organic and mineral material in each medium to cope with the range of UK environments.

“This means that designers will be able to have much better control over the performance of the green roof’s water management, as flood mitigation has been an important driver,” she said.

“It also means both designers and installers will be able to balance the aesthetic requirements of the green roof with consideration for how much maintenance should be done.

“Getting the right balance is very important to the plant survival, as well as the overall environmental performance of the green roof, such as water management and temperature regulation.”

The Boningale GreenSky website also features a decision tool, which recommends which substrate is needed and offers some planting density advice, when details about the green roof to be created are entered. Just find the guides and tools section at [www.boningale-greensky.co.uk](http://www.boningale-greensky.co.uk) for details.

“The new range of substrates should enable landscape architects to choose much more accurately the kind of medium they need for a particular project,” said Maggie.

Boningale GreenSky will be launching the new substrate range as well as its innovative SkyPlugs, which are made to thrive in the harsh conditions of a green roof environment, at EcoBuild, the world’s largest event for sustainable design, construction and the built environment, at ExCel in London, on March 5-7, 2013.

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