

PEAT.

Peat, though not a mineral, is closely associated with the mineral industry inasmuch as in its winning it is dug from deposits in the ground.

It is a decomposition product of vegetable matter, especially mosses and other bog plants. These plants after maturing die, and on them new plants spring up. Thus layer on layer of dead leaves, stems, and roots accumulate until deposits of peat many feet in thickness are produced.

Peat litter is the undecomposed or only partly decomposed matter, and *humified peat* or *humus* is the fully decomposed, pulpy peat in which the structure of the original vegetation has been destroyed.

USES.

Aside from the use of peat as fuel, it is employed for several other purposes.

Owing to the potash and nitrogenous matter contained in it, peat makes a valuable fertilizer material. Humified peat is dried, ground, and mixed with chemical or artificial fertilizers as a "filler." It not only introduces nitrogenous matter and potash in a suitable form, but owing to certain physical properties which it possesses, it tends to beneficially modify the soil on which it is used, improving its texture, and in the case of light, sandy soil increases its retention of water.

Peat litter is used to absorb liquid manures, blood and wet tankage, after which it is dried, ground, and sold as fertilizer.

PREPARATION.

Peat as it is excavated from the bogs contains 85 per cent of water, or more. In order to suit it to its uses it must be dried to a very much lower content of water. For peat powder for fertilizer filler it is dried to about 10 or 15 per cent, and the peat litter to about 40 per cent. (After the litter has absorbed the manure or blood it must, of course, be dried to 10 or 15 per cent before grinding.)