Transcription of “Potting Soils and Local Authorities” Workshop Moderators: Anne Vignot and Jérémie Cholet.

V. Froidevaux : Besançon is the first green city of France in the category with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The city manages a number of forests, planted and grassy areas, as well as sporting grounds, and has chosen to treat significant quantities of related waste via composting.
With regard to pruning: milling is done on site followed by composting; however it’s not widely employed because a lot of work involves using a soil-less technique with special soils (otherwise it’s used as a soil improver for green areas).
The installation of a wood-burning heating station would permit the use of pruning residue.

LM Rivière proposes to reduce the amount of pruning (more savings, less wood production) and suggests practices that are more suitable to the needs of plants than technical departments.

Daniel Gilbert : demand for wood shavings in the Franche-Comté region is higher than the amount produced; hence the risk of having to separate pruning residue (and prices are increasing).

V. Froidevaux : pruning is being optimized (three-year rotation); it’s impossible to do less.
A high-performance production unit is generally comprised of 200 people for green areas; the demand for outsourcing is made only for heavy machinery.
The city has a strong policy for decorating urban areas with flowers.
Integrated biological control leads to another vision of green areas, for example the change from grasslands to meadows.
Different types of watering techniques were also discussed.

The director of green areas is conducting several tests but fears phytosanitary problems.

- Inconclusive bibliographic searches: too many phytosanitary treatments
- Use of local materials
- Reduction in the use of pesticides
- Problems with green areas showing high PAH, metal content…similar to sludge.

The machines are designed for peat.

The certification of green compost costs 5000 €

No problem if the composting is well done (and not just aged).
Phytosanitary concerns are fewer and far between as compared to those regarding pathogens.
Several issues were raised, such as postponing things over time (until standards change), or the lack of specific danger thresholds (for example, radioactivity levels of Baltic peatlands).

HLM companies: no edible production, hence fewer concerns about compost use.
Production of green waste.

Equipment-related problems: a change of peat substrate entails a change in technical process.

Gradually, it becomes difficult to change things.
A recurring problem throughout the network but no immediate solution is available.

Anne Vignot proposes to refer to Besançon’s Education Center for botanists and gardeners with the aim of promoting horticultural training (geared to the general ecology of plants).

LMR : We have to change our way of thinking, going from the question « How to save on peat use? » to asking « How much peat should be used to increase quality?

Botanical Gardens : no production logic process; therefore it is possible to safely use peat-free products.

Need for political decisions in order to guide the choices of local authorities.

F. Laggoun-Desfarge: the change in training will work only when politicians are aware of it.

Cerlatez : a study was conducted.
A company that chose to use a peat-free product took 10 years before finding the right replacement product, offering good water and nitrogen retention, ease of use and stability.