

## **The use of peat in horticultural production.**

### **Louis-Marie Rivière**

Directeur de recherche honoraire INRA

Président du Comité Français des Tourbières et de la tourbe (International Peat Society – France)

7 rue Alexandre Fleming

49066 Angers Cedex 2

[lmriviere@rezo.net](mailto:lmriviere@rezo.net)

Since the 1960's, horticultural production has been marked by the development of the use of peat substrates. These new substrates have very deeply modified pot plant production techniques, moving away from the strict field of plants intended to be sold as house plants and becoming one of the main means of producing woody plants. This change has also led to the production of vegetables and cut flowers by so called soilless techniques. Peat took a prominent place within the modern horticultural substrates..

This paper discusses the uses and markets of peat intended for all horticultural activities. In each case we will endeavour to understand the technical elements justifying the use of peat in order to better consider alternative solutions. We will first consider the uses (soil conditioners and growing media), and then the markets (amateur and professional).

To summarize the questions posed by the use of peat in horticulture, research must be based on the following elements:

- developing composts resulting from potentially non polluting organic waste (an important part of which returns to green waste), for uses other than the growing media;
- reserving most of the peat for certain demanding market in terms of economic stakes whilst offering quality products acceptable for other situations;
- continuing to seek alternative products which may partially replace peat in mixtures, and in the more distant future, replace peat in most horticultural uses. This research must simultaneously consider developing products and techniques that will make it possible to optimize them in culture.
- Finally, is peat, as a product, compatible with sustainable development? This question brings issues on the potentiality of regeneration of peat bogs and the current projects of production of sphagnum usable as a substrate for the production of certain horticultural species.