

## **Commercial peat extraction**

Peat is a; "compact, dark brown organic material with high carbon content, built up by the partial decay and carbonization of vegetation in the acid water of bogs." Peat is formed from many different types of plants. In the Northern hemisphere it is mostly mosses. Peat can be found all over the world. Northern regions of the United States, Canada, Russia, Scandinavian countries, England, and Ireland all have peat bogs. Dried, compressed peat called briquettes, are used in lots of European countries, particularly Ireland, as a fuel, to burn in fires like coal. In Ireland it is called "Turf." Peat is in great demand by the Horticultural industry as a beading compound.

Peat extraction can bring jobs and money into the countryside. However as it destroys the landscape of the country, it also can drive away tourism in the area. This is one of the main reasons why I am against commercial peat extraction. Another reason is that it destroys the delicate peat bog ecosystem. In an ecosystem, different organisms depend on other organisms to survive. If all the peat bogs are destroyed many rare plants will become extinct, something people will regret later and complain about. Many types of plants live in peat bogs, like heather, bog moss sundew milk wart, sphagnum moss and many others. Animals like frogs newts, leeches, water louse and so on all live in peat bogs.

The Horticulture industry is mostly to blame for depleting peat bogs. They extract peat on a vast scale ruining the landscape, disrupting the ecosystem and changing the amount of water that is held in the ground. (The water table.)

Gardeners bed their plants in peat, as they believe it is the best type of soil for planting their plants.

They argue that although peat has to have fertilizing nutrients added to it (Peat naturally has no nutrition in it) it holds and releases water, retains air spaces, is reasonable sterile, toxin free, has a low PH value, different textures and encourages fine roots to grow.

There are lots of peat alternatives on the market. Different types of compost and coir (a waste product from the coconut industry) are the most common, although they are expensive due to low demand. If people used more alternative bedding sources, the prices will fall.

The Horticulture industry would argue that if commercial peat extraction stopped, it would have extremely harmful effects on economy. One thousand people are employed in peat extraction in the Uk. Thirty thousand jobs are linked to the packing and transport of peat, £500 million are linked to peat sales.

If peat extraction is stopped the One thousand people who are employed in peat extraction could collect and produce peat alternatives and the Thirty thousand people that are linked to the packing and transport of peat, could package and process peat alternatives. As peat alternatives use waste products, it would reduce waste disposal problems. The farmers who own the land that the peat is extracted from could be paid by the government to keep the peat bog intact.

Local farmers have used peat in Ireland for hundreds of years as a fuel. This domestic extraction of peat does not have a serious effect of the peat bog ecosystem, or on the landscape of the country. Peat is sold on the market in briquettes for burning in our homes. People use peat as it is a cheap fuel.

Coal burns far more efficiently than peat, as peat contains a high amount of water and ash. Therefore burning coal instead of peat is far more economical.

Most peat bogs in Europe have been cut away and lost forever. The Belgium government is so concerned about the commercial peat extraction in Ireland it has actually bought peat bog to make sure some remain intact.

Peat bogs are of great scientific interest. Many have been designated as Special Scientific Sites of Interest. (SSSI's) Peat bogs are over 4000 years old and contain clues about climate changes. Peat is an excellent preserver. Many artifacts have been found in bog lands the most important is that of the Tollund man, found in Denmark in 1952, he was a 2000 year old Germanic man perfectly preserved, he was wearing only a metal cap and belt with metal noose attached around his neck.

Due to the natural beauty of peat bogs, tourism is created. Tourist on peat bogs include sites in Thorne, Hatfield and in Ireland the Marble arch caves. Peat extraction ruins the landscape driving away tourists. Because there is less peat to soak up water, the Water table rises flooding the Marble arch caves and eroding the rock, that can lead to parts of the caves collapsing.

There is only 15% of Bog land in Ireland that remains Intact. Domestic and commercial extraction, The Horticulture industry, Pollution and Drainage has destroyed 85% of bog land. What's left is a springy wet marsh, known as Mire.

