

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

8/1/2024

My First Peat Bog

Chris Beytes



This is the 600-acre “President Ouest” (West) peat bog of Premier Tech, located adjacent to their headquarters in Rivière-du-Loup, about two hours northeast of Quebec, Canada. The President Ouest bog has been in operation since the early 1990s. From this one bog they’ll harvest about 5 million cubic feet of peat per year.

As you can see, a working peat bog looks a lot like any rich-soiled agriculture field right before planting: a brown sea to the black spruce-lined horizon. Along the center road are long windrows of harvested peat drying and

waiting for transport to the plant where it will be cleaned, graded and blended.

Blended? Yes. Peat comes in several quality grades; to achieve consistency, various grades are blended together so every bag you get—whether pure peat or a potting mix—is just like the last one.

I was excited to see the actual peat vacuum harvesters in action, sucking up the top thin layer of loose peat. Some are self-contained; others are big vacuum wagons pulled by a tractor. Each year they only harvest a few inches of peat—I’m told that’s mostly a function of weather and moisture; the conditions are right for harvest for only a short period during the summer and fall. Interestingly, during my visit it was exceptionally dry. It looked like you could have sucked up 6 in. of the stuff in one go. But that was unusual and by the weekend it had started raining.

Premier Tech also took the time to show me their restoration efforts. Yes, peat is renewable: You can harvest it for years and then turn the site back into a natural, flora- and fauna-rich habitat. Premier Tech has led the North American and now global industry in developing restoration techniques. One 10-acre corner of this bog has been in restoration just three years, but already the native vegetation—including sphagnum—is gaining a foothold. **GT**