

New England Resources goes organic

By Sandra Diamond Fox, Correspondent

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Spring finally has arrived, but instead of spending hundreds of dollars to grow all the pretty flowers and plants, there is a gardening element much more important you should invest in first -- your soil.

"You should have your soil tested regularly to make sure it's healthy enough for your plants and vegetables to grow in it," said Jeff Demers, 36, owner of New England Resources, a manufacturer and seller of mulch, soil and compost on Old Hawleyville Road in Bethel.

The business' manufacturing facility is on a 30-acre farm on Great Plain Road in Danbury. The business sells to landscape designers and landscape architects in Fairfield and Westchester, N.Y., counties.

New England Resources has a new product line called Exceed Soil Products for use on landscapes, lawns and gardens. The Exceed topsoil and compost lines are 100 percent organic, the company said.

Exceed compost is made from recycled yard trimmings. "We screen the compost to make it easy to use, and to ensure there aren't a lot of rocks and wood chips in it," said Demers, of Bethel.

According to Abigail Maynard, agricultural scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, a good quality compost provides many benefits.

"Using compost increases the soil's moisture-holding capacity," she said. "While 8 inches of sandy soil can hold 1 inch of water, if you add compost to the soil yearly for three to four years, the amount of water the soil can hold will double."

Maynard cautioned against using chemical fertilizers. "The nitrogen in them is in a form that can leach down and contaminate the groundwater that you drink," she said.

Exceed Topsoil is made from compost along with an additive that gives it a balanced pH, and a proper sand, silt and clay mixture, Demers said.

"Trying to get a good topsoil that has nutrients, organic matter and a proper pH (which is from 6.8 to 7.2), is hard to come by these days," he said. "Most of the soil around western Connecticut has a low pH. While grass can tolerate this, during the summertime when it gets dry out, the roots are almost starving for food because there's a lack of nutrients in the soil."

He said some companies mix together a subsoil, a native sand and a fill material.

"Many people automatically assume that if the topsoil is brown, it's good, but looks aren't everything," Demers said. To promote consistency in his soil, Demers has it tested every three months by the University of Connecticut Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab in Storrs.

"In the long run, organic is better for your family," he said. "You are taking something that Mother Nature produced and, through the composting process, you are giving it back."

For more information on Exceed Soil Products, call 203-748-6516, or visit www.exceedsoil.com.



Jeff Demers of Exceed Soil Products stands in front of an Exceed compost pile at the Danbury facility on Wednesday, March 24, 2010. Photo: Michael Duffy / The News-Times