

Weston's Eco-Mission

Sustainability is an integral part of this garden center's core values



"WE HAVE A SET OF CORE values for our company, and one of those core values is that we believe in being responsible in how our operation affects the environment," says Nancy Cassidy, Garden Center Manager at Weston Nurseries, Hopkinton, MA.

As part of its wide-reaching sustainable practices, the garden center conserves water with a catch basin system that drains it back into the retailer's ponds. In addition, drip irrigation, which replaced overhead watering, has cut usage by 80 percent.

The garden center's commitment to sustainability carries through to its green good offerings. Most of the plants sold come from the Northwest region, minimizing their carbon footprint.

Weston carries rain barrels made from recycled plastic, which not

only conserve water but keep plastic from ending up in a landfill. The garden center's wide selection of other eco-friendly items includes CowPots, made from composted cow manure; biodegradable indoor pots made of bamboo; composters; a broad line of natural and organic controls; organic paper mulch; manual reel push lawn mowers; reusable stainless steel water bottles; recycling and shopping bags; and outdoor rugs made from recycled plastic. Purchases are loaded into cars, which are protected by biodegradable trunk liners.

Weston collects compostables, even from other area landscapers, and turns it into compost for sale at the nursery. Chipped trees and brush are used as mulch for plants and for the biofuel industry. Old mulch is screened and made into top soil.

Two years ago, the garden center started a plastic pot recycling program that serves other area landscapers in addition to Weston's customers. "A lot of communities have cut back on their recycling services, and it's been harder and harder for landscapers to find places to drop," Cassidy says. "If it's a pot we can reuse, we will, and we also have a relationship with a company that picks them up and brings them back to a facility to grind and remold."

Customers are encouraged to learn more about living sustainably at educational sessions conducted on site. Cassidy says, "We've had a very big footprint in the Northeast for providing plant material out to homeowners, and just felt it was important to look at ways the community around us could use products that are more sustainable." ■