



## SPOTLIGHT ON... DeSANTIS LANDSCAPES

### AT A GLANCE

**DeSantis Landscapes**  
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desantislandscapes.com

#### WHAT THEY DO:

Design, install and maintain landscapes for residential and commercial properties

#### THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC:

DeSantis Landscapes has been certified ecofriendly and sustainable by two different government agencies. The company's efforts often are above and beyond the scope of the certifications.

#### HERE'S HOW THEY DID IT:

**Switch to hybrids:** staff who drive a lot got hybrids instead of trucks.

**Replace old equipment with efficient designs:** Blowers, lawnmowers and other equipment are upgraded instead of merely replaced.

**Boost recycling efforts:** Save old nursery pots for reuse, recycling the rest; recycle pallets and PVC pipes

**Make it themselves:** Instead of buying compost tea, DeSantis employees mix it up themselves; leaves from cleaning properties are composted and used in landscaping jobs.



### DeSantis Landscapes is a pioneer in the business of helping people keep their yards green in the most sustainable ways possible.

It's not just in their offering of organic fertilizers and pesticides, native plants that need less water and irrigation systems that gauge the need for water. DeSantis clients benefit from these practices with healthy soil and air, and a lower water bill.

But their sustainable practices are also found behind-the-scenes.

A landscaping company cannot do business without a fleet of vehicles and equipment, but DeSantis has taken extra measures to make sure that its fuel use is as minimal as possible and its equipment is as healthy for its employees as for the environment.

Sales and management staff drive hybrid vehicles instead of trucks. The company now has four hybrid vehicles, replacing the trucks they drove before. DeSantis sees an estimated \$10,000 savings in gasoline annually from the switch.

Two managers telecommute from Portland, eliminating the need to use fuel for the two-hour commute to Salem and back. Over the course of a year, its telecommuting policy saves an estimated \$7,000 a year.

As DeSantis replaces old or broken equipment, new equipment is purchased that is more efficient and more environmentally friendly.

The company replaces old trucks with diesel trucks, which run on a cleaner fuel: 20 percent biodiesel.

Landscaping equipment that used inefficient two-stroke engines has been replaced with four-stroke alternatives. The result: a quieter and more efficient machine. The older-model leaf blowers, for example, ranged from 80 to 90 decibels. The new ones are quieter – at 60-70 decibels. And the newer ones reduce emissions by as much as 80 percent. The more efficient machines cost no more than the two-stroke ones, but DeSantis also switched to buying fuel for this equipment in bulk, which saves the company 50 percent in fuel costs.

With a fleet the size of DeSantis', oil changes are a weekly task. In addition to recycling the used oil through ORRICO, DeSantis purchases re-refined oil at a 30 to 40 percent savings. In keeping with its effort to reduce fuel use, DeSantis purchased solar panels to offset its use of electricity from coal-fired power plants or natural gas.



Vice president Ken DeSantis says DeSantis Landscapes is committed to sustainable practices and sustainable landscaping designs.

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Broken and worn nursery pots are given to plastics recycler Agri-Plas instead of thrown away. Used pots in good condition are reused.



DeSantis stores its used pallets for reuse or recycling.



Leaves gathered from cleaning residential or commercial properties are brought to a compost pile on DeSantis' site. Once they decompose, they can be mixed and used for landscaping projects.

The solar panels installed on the company's State Street roof offset 15 percent of the electricity use.

Recycling and reusing also have played a role in DeSantis' sustainability.

At their main office on State Street, DeSantis recycles hundreds of plastic nursery pots each month. Intact pots are picked up by a broker who resells them to nurseries. Plastics recycler Agri-Plas collects the broken ones.

Items such as PVC pipes are saved for one of several special collections Marion County offers each year.

DeSantis composts all leaves on site and then uses that compost in landscaping projects. The company saves about \$5,000 each year on its garbage service to not haul those leaves away.

In addition to making some of its own mulch, DeSantis employees tried their hand at brewing their own compost tea three years ago.

Compost tea is an inoculant that introduces beneficial bacteria, fungi, protozoa and nematodes to the soil. DeSantis employees mix a 200-gallon batch about once a month for use on clients' properties. Switching to their homemade brew has saved the company 50 percent of the cost of the tea.

All of DeSantis' practices fall under a term coined just for them, by them: EarthSense. Customers understand the value in using a local company that offers sustainable products while also running a sustainable operation.

Their EarthSense strategy also extends to the health of their

employees. A monthly wellness program educates their 58 employees about health care issues and safety concerns on the job.

In addition to EarthWISE certification, DeSantis Landscapes has also received Eco-Biz certification from the Portland metropolitan area. Even though DeSantis Landscapes was practicing sustainability before the certification programs even started, the certifications help to verify to customers what DeSantis stands for.

Vice-President Ken DeSantis says, "It is a stamp that says you guys do what you say you can do."

## EarthWISE Certification

Originally certified as a Marion County EarthWISE business in 2008, DeSantis Landscapes was re-certified in 2011. DeSantis is one of three landscape companies certified EarthWISE among more than 100 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.



## WANT TO DO THIS AT YOUR BUSINESS?

Marion County's EarthWISE program can help. Visit [mcEarthwise.net](http://mcEarthwise.net), call 503.365.3188 or email [Earthwise@co.marion.or.us](mailto:Earthwise@co.marion.or.us)