

Long Island
BusinessNEWS

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TWO MINUTES

Pay Dirt

Charles Vigliotti

President and Chief Executive Officer

More than 20 years ago, **Charles Vigliotti** noticed that great quantities of grass and other garden cuttings were being tossed into the trash – and landfilled. Where others saw waste and worry, he and his brothers saw possibility. They have since built a business on greening up Long Island. Long Island Compost harvests tons of grass and other organic waste, composts it and creates products such as top soil and mulch. The chief executive of the Westbury-based company talked with LIBN about how his business grows.

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You've been in the composting business since the early 1990s. How has the business changed?

The recycling industry as a whole is relatively young. Composting organic materials is very young in terms of a large-scale movement. Over the last 20 years, composting of yard waste and organics was seen as a waste reduction strategy with the closing of Long Island's landfills. We now look at that material – yard waste – as an asset, something we're able to take and turn into the world's greatest garden soils and bring back into the marketplace.

What materials does your firm recycle?

Grass clippings, leaves, brush. We're even recycling organic waste from Whole Foods. Besides that, we branched out into other organics. We're handling the duck manure for the largest duck farm on Long Island. The program we put into effect there reduced their negative environmental impact dramatically. Nitrogen would leach out. By composting material on their site, we were able to arrest this leaching.

How much grass and other clippings will you recycle this year?

At this point, we expect to recycle over half of Long Island's total yard waste this year. Over 200,000 tons of material that otherwise would have been exported off Long Island annually. Over 2,000 landscapers use our facilities.

Where are your soils and other products sold?

We produce over 5 million bags of soil and mulch per year. We package it all ourselves and distribute it from our Yaphank facility. Our largest consumer in our consumer packaging division is Home Depot. But we also have a presence in over 500 independent garden centers. We're strong supporters of those small, independent businesses.

What's the geographic range of your sales?

Our products are sold in virtually every independent garden center in the New York metropolitan area, every Home Depot on Long Island and downstate New York, every Agway in the Northeast. We're distributing product from Boston to Philadelphia. And we're manufacturing these products right here on Long Island. The Hamptons Estate product. The Great Gardens product and Long Island Compost.

What are some unusual sites where your product is ending up?

We're the soil supplier to the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden and the Queens Botanical Garden. We also supply specially designed planting mixes to the Central Park Conservancy. We're supplying all the soil to the High Line project on the West Side [of Manhattan], an elevated park they're building.



Is your business down because of the economy?

Our business is growing. In these tough economic times, we're looking forward to continued year-over-year growth of gross sales. We anticipate double-digit growth in gross sales. We expect our bottom line to follow suit. We employ 168. Our employment continues to grow. We have a payroll of over \$9 million a year.

Why is it growing?

We've increased our capacity so we can handle more material. We've been very successful in getting market acceptance of our finished products.

Do you have any other clients that might be of interest to readers?

Citi Field and Yankee Stadium. We provide Yankee Stadium with various products. At Citi Field, we're providing all the exterior planting soil. Outside the ballpark, there are planting areas all over. It's not just dirt that they're doing. They want to make sure that whatever's planted there flourishes. That it's a soil that's nutritionally rich and will support plant life. We will deliver thousands of cubic yards of material this year.

Long Island Compost

100 Urban Avenue
Westbury, New York 11590
(516) 334-6600
www.licompost.com