

Recycling garden waste is growing into a valuable business



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Michael Scanlon and Colm Grant with John McGuinness, Founder, Mulch

Dad of one John McGuinness (32), from Malahide in Dublin, founded garden waste recycling company Mulch in 2011:

"Mulch offers the country's only drive-through green waste centre, at Coolock in north Dublin. Both professional and hobby gardeners drop off their garden waste such as grass, leaves, trees and compost - we also collect - for a fee of €15 per cubic metre. Then we recycle it into environmentally-friendly garden products which we sell in our adjacent store.

My background is in landscaping, I used to run my own business. I always loved agriculture and horticulture. I studied engineering and business at DCU but knew straight away after leaving college that this was what I wanted to do. Working in landscaping, I soon realised how difficult it was to dispose of green waste and also how tricky it is to buy good quality compost and garden products in decent amounts, so that's how Mulch was born.

We have a huge processing facility. It takes about 14 to 17 weeks to turn raw garden material into high quality pure compost; the end result is like a black powder and it is a very potent soil enricher. We also sell it blended into soil or peat or sand, whatever is needed.

We start by shredding the green waste really finely in a huge shredder. Then it is packed away and left to ferment. It naturally starts to heat up as its own bacteria gets to work. You have to agitate the material every ten days. Then we screen it, clean away the excess, and you have your pure compost.

One thing that makes Mulch different is that we are very careful about our use of peat. We strive to stay away from it where we can because it is an irreplaceable product and Ireland's boglands have already been so depleted.

I am thinking of opening another outlet, in south Dublin. But the location is crucial and it is difficult to find a large enough industrial space that is also close to residential areas, which supply our customers. Our location in Coolock is right in the middle of several different residential areas, it works really well.

The biggest challenge has been marketing and advertising. Our customer base, people who garden, are aged 40 to 70. They are not reached by social media in the same way younger generations are. So figuring out how to catch our target market has been tricky, although our website does get a lot of traffic.

I have four staff now and turnover of about €600,000 a year, growing 30pc annually. It is a lot of work but I really love it.

I feel like I haven't worked a day in three and a half year despite lots of 80 hour weeks, because I enjoy what I do."

Indo Business
