

BIOTURF NEWS



Plants thrive on organic diet, says Atlanta landscaping firm

Post Landscape Services says the plants are more vigorous, healthy.

by Todd Tibbitts,
Post Landscape Services

Post Properties, Inc., developers of more than 70 apartment complexes, has throughout its history had a policy of protecting the natural settings that surround its various projects.

The concern has carried over to Post Landscape Services, a subsidiary of Post Properties, and it has also expanded to handle commercial clients other than Post Apartment Homes.

One aspect of enriching the soil, a

key element in the Post approach, is the use of organic fertilizers and pesticides.

The use of organics is but one part of an overall commitment by PLS to retain the natural beauty of the land.

When PLS develops a site, among the considerations are retention of native trees, wildlife preservation, wetland preservation, water efficient landscaping, positioning of trees for maximum shade and windbreak, and the retention of the natural land contours for proper drainage and aesthetics.

The primary goal is to plant and maintain outdoor living environments which will be actively used and enjoyed by residents of Post Apartment Homes or the residents of other commercial properties serviced by Post.

An appealing landscape is best appreciated when people can wander among the green foliage and colorful flowers.

Balance IPM

The use of organics in maintaining the landscape around an apartment complex is an extension of the considerations that begin during the planning and preparation stages for a site. One of the purposes behind the use of organics is to balance out an



Containers in the Post River Apartments are kept on an organic program.

integrated pest management program.

As is well known, organics allow for biological control of pests, rather than chemical control.

Lady bugs and other beneficial insects or microbes are left alive, and soil can actually be enriched and become more productive.

With these positive results, plants are more vigorous, and healthy plants can survive changes in weather conditions, such as drought.

PLS Floriculture Manager Carol Hooks has noted that plants previously



Conifers and perennials at the Post Vinings Apartment community in Smyrna, Georgia. In the foreground are *Ajuga*. *Dianthus* 'Baths Pink' are in the background.

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labeled as problem performers began flourishing as the soil conditions responded to use of organic matter. This was particularly important in beds that had been chemically treated for 20 years, and had been depleted of essential microorganisms. The increase in microbial activity as a result of the organic treatment worked wonders, says Hooks.

Organics have been most productive on flower beds maintained by Post. The formulation used in flower beds is consistent with commercial fertilizers, and granular forms are available. These products are applied by hand.

When Post began to test the use of organic products, flower beds were chosen because a contained, controllable plot could be isolated. In the case of flowers, which have a short duration and require more regular attention, organics are a good fit, as they are for vegetable gardens.

Protecting the integrity of the environment is the foremost motivation for the use of organics at Post Landscape Services. But, as stated earlier, healthy plants are more vigorous, and for flowers, this results in more vivid color. The investment in organics, which are still more expensive than alternative fertilizers and pesticides, can produce long term benefits by contributing to soil quality and generating better plants. For a developer, this end result makes the investment in landscaping more cost effective, while at the same time, produce attractive scenery anyone can appreciate.

Post Landscape Services has maintained these principles in all of its installation and maintenance practices. With a greater demand for organic products by the public, the price has begun to fall gradually on the products for the commercial market.

This trend should continue as more developers and property managers begin to appreciate the merits of organic products.

—The author is vice president of Post Landscape Services, Atlanta, Ga.



The Rosa 'Nearly Wild' bloom eight months a year. Fertilizer is applied only occasionally.



Spring pansies and tulips in Smyrna, Ga. Cool season applications of organic products on winter annuals help keep the bloom count high.



Summer flowers on display at the Post Bridge Apartments in Marietta. Post uses organic products on more than six acres of flowers around the city.