

## Local business finding success with 'oil of the soil'

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**LEBANON** — Few men have as much appreciation for rotting organic garbage as Wes Duren.

The general manager for Marvin's Organic Garden gazes out over the acres of chipped wood, recycled cardboard, and even a mound of discarded coffee beans with a pride not normally associated with garbage. But looking out on his mounds, Duren sees a whole new future.

"Compost is the oil of the soil," Duren said. "More and more companies are finding it a win-win situation to recycle, and the results of that is composting the waste. Our goal is to keep as much as we can out of landfills."

Marvin's has just been certified by the United State Department of Agriculture to process food waste into organic compost, the only site in Ohio to earn this distinction. Compost is a nutrient-rich type of fertilizer created from decomposing remains of former living matter like trees and plants.

Marvin's Organic Gardens uses compost in all its landscaping projects as well as to grow the plants it sell at its facility on U.S. 42, midway between Lebanon and Mason.

The company is in the process of receiving the food waste from a number of grocery chains and food manufacturers to compost and restart the circle of life. Walmart stores from around southwest Ohio will bring up to 70 tons of waste to Marvin's off-site composting area every week, Duren said.

In 2009, Marvin's produced 20,000 cubic yards of compost or one football field piled 64 feet deep, Duren said. He expects to produce three to four times more this year.

The facility received a \$250,000 matching grant from the Ohio EPA to buy three new machines that will help in the compost production. The machines will grind waste as well as filter out large chunks.

Kory Lundberg, a spokeswoman for Walmart, said that store does not comment directly on their distributors, but said it was dedicated to reducing waste and being more efficient and that one of their main goals is to create zero waste.

Despite concerns, Duren said that properly made compost will not smell even as it decomposes. The proper mixture is 30 parts dry material — sticks, brown leaves — to one part wet — green leaves, food stuffs. Both parts are necessary to create a healthy, nutrient rich pile of compost.

Environmental responsibility has long been a concern for the Duren family, dating back to before Wes's father, Marvin, started the organic garden store that bears his name.

"Dad owned 24 Waffle Houses and he would save the coffee grounds and egg shells," Duren said. "Even then my dad saw a need for compost. We accrued mountains of it on a private level for when we started the business up. I think its the secret to any success we've had."