

Front Lines

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Espoma's New Fertilizer Plant

Jennifer Polanz

The Espoma Company has been producing organic fertilizer for the lawn and garden market for nearly 100 years, but for much of that time they relied on outside suppliers to dry and pelletize their inputs, while they did the bulk screening, blending and packaging at the Millville, New Jersey, facility.

Now, the company is in the process of finishing a new, state-of-the-art, 60,000-sq. ft. processing facility in Hegins, Pennsylvania, which will give them the ability to dry, blend and granulate organic ingredients into prilled fertilizer (see the photo for an example of prilled product).

I recently chatted with President Jeremy Brunner to find out more details. My first question was, “Why Hegins?” It’s in proximity to major egg farms in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area, he answered, which offers bulk poultry waste that can be dried and pasteurized for organic fertilizer. The past several years—even before the pandemic—have been challenging for sourcing materials, he said, and this way they’re in charge of their own destiny.

“Rather than relying on other companies to bring it in, we can do it ourselves,” he said.



Pictured: The Espoma Company President Jeremy Brunner with his father and CEO Serge Brunner, in front of the new facility in Hegins, Pennsylvania.

That not only benefits The Espoma Company, but also the poultry farms and the surrounding waterways, as Espoma will be removing millions of pounds of raw materials and diverting them from land application, which can cause nutrient runoff in nearby waterways (including the Susquehanna River, which empties into Chesapeake Bay).

Another benefit of the plant is the equipment is designed to create more uniform, less dusty, “prilled” fertilizer that can be used in conventional spreaders. The factory is expected to start up by the end of the year, so retail customers will likely still see product from current suppliers until early next year.

It will be a rolling transition, and the new factory may even open up new opportunities for additional product offerings. Jeremy noted bulk options like truckloads and totes will be available in the future, as well as more lawn- and turf-focused products. But the first year will be heavily focused on fulfilling current products. **GP**