

# A Steady Path To Success

New Hampshire-based landscape supply firm gains customers throughout New England

By Amy Materson



**As** a 14-year-old part-time landscaper in New Hampshire, Keith Anastasy displayed both an entrepreneurial spirit and a knack for successful problem solving. Faced with the inability to find a steady supply of mulch — a problem that also impacted other area landscapers — Anastasy first had the idea to start his own business supplying landscaping materials. An early effort in the industry, *Outdoor World*, was successful enough that Anastasy could sell the company.

Next, Anastasy turned his attention to The Dirt Doctors, a company he founded in Pembroke in 1989. Growing the company over time, the Dirt Doctors now supplies customers throughout New England, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont and Maine.



Keith Anastasy of The Dirt Doctors, located in Pembroke, New Hampshire, supplies customers throughout New England with a wide range of landscaping materials.



The Dirt Doctors relies on their Hitachi ZW80 wheel loader to keep their trucks full and ready for deliveries.

## Mountains of mulch

With origins in mulch, The Dirt Doctors now provides everything to do with landscaping, excluding fertilizer. “If it can be delivered on trucks, we have it,” Anastasy says. “Mulch, pavers and hardscaping, specialty soils, and more.”

Anastasy says The Dirt Doctors has approximately 150,000 cubic yards of mulch and between 50,000 and 70,000 cubic yards of loam at their site in Pembroke, as well as a million yards of hardscape material.

At their 40,000-acre facility, mulch options include chocolate brown, cocoa bark, black forest, cardinal red and hemlock bark, among others. Gravel and hardpack in a range of sizes, and stone in a variety of colors are housed on site, as well as all types of sandy fill, sifted loam, play sand and ball field mixes. Hardscaping includes flag and bluestone, natural stone, granite, veneer and pavers. Additionally, the company provides services such as contract soil screening, grinding, compost

management and consulting, and commercial snow plow services.

A main goal, and a secret to success, he says, is keeping the trucks full.

Keeping the trucks full means keeping the equipment moving. That’s why reliability in a piece of equipment is critical for Anastasy, and he places the utmost importance on maximizing machine uptime. With a mixed fleet during growth periods over the years, Anastasy learned valuable lessons about equipment downtime. “There were some pieces of equipment in the fleet for which there would practically be a backup machine sitting here all the time, waiting for it to break down,” he jokes.

## Finding the right fit

Equipment downtime is far less of a problem than it used to be for The Dirt Doctors. When purchasing his Hitachi ZW80 wheel loader, he replaced a unit boasting more than 5,000 hours. Therefore, he knew

it was important to add a machine to the fleet that his operators could run comfortably for long hours, but would also minimize downtime. “We run our Hitachi seven days a week, 15 hours a day, and it just goes,” he says.

The agile ZW80 offers the right combination of power and performance for their operation. A powerful, fuel efficient engine that enables Anastasy’s crew to work all day, allied with a 7.8-foot dumping clearance and 3.2-foot dumping reach, is the right matchup for loading applications at The Dirt Doctors’ facility.

Of course, with operators in the cab all day, comfort is a high priority, and Anastasy listens to his employees. The loader’s adjustable suspension seat absorbs shocks and vibration, ensuring reduced operator fatigue during those 15-hour days.

As he sings praises about his equipment, Anastasy also can’t say enough about his dealer. He met Jeff Morse about 25 years ago,



Jeff Morse, left, general manager of Chappell Tractor in Concord, New Hampshire, has had a working relationship with Keith Anastasy and The Dirt Doctors for 25 years.



The Dirt Doctors has a variety of gravel and hard pack at their 40-acre facility.

and the relationship has flourished over the years. Morse is general manager of the Concord, New Hampshire, location of Chappell Tractor, which also has locations in Brentwood and Milford.

Anastasy says he has enjoyed a positive relationship not only with Morse, but also with the dealership. "I like the equipment Chappell offers, both in terms of price and machine longevity," he says. "They don't go down, and my employees like them, also. If the equipment needs anything, I call Jeff and they just take care of it."

### Focus on the future

Morse says the Hitachis are a great fit for Anastasy and for the company overall. "Keith is a forward thinker in the industry," he says. "He comes up with new ideas that keep his company on the cutting edge. These machines are perfect for the materials he handles — he runs his machines for hours on end, so reliability and versatility are both key for him."

The company has experienced steady, positive growth over time, and Anastasy expects future expansion to be slow and solid. He points at potential economic instability as a reason to carefully look at future strategies, and says he'd like to see what happens in the 2020 election year. However, Anastasy notes that, no matter what the future holds, for The Dirt Doctors, expansion strategies likely lie in specialty items.

"We'll offer more specialty tailored soils," he says. "For example, soil that is blended for plants, soil blended for lawns. We'll include add-on products — basically anything we can stick in a truck and make a profit on it." ■