



Keeping your green roof project green: A bright spot in an otherwise cloudy real estate picture

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As New York celebrates Earth Day 2009, the city's real estate community continues to embrace the benefits of incorporating green roofs into new and existing commercial, industrial, residential and public buildings. And for good reason. From property tax abatements to LEED point qualification to savings on heating and cooling costs, green roofs represent a bright spot in an otherwise cloudy real estate picture.

Green roofs can be as simple as a two-inch covering of hardy groundcover or as complex as a fully accessible park complete with trees. A properly installed green roof can protect a building's roof membrane, resulting in a longer material lifespan, help to reduce noise pollution for occupants, contribute to meeting regulatory requirements for storm-water management and, perhaps most important, increase the value of the property and the marketability of the building as a whole, particularly for accessible green roofs.

Not all green roofs are created equal, however, and central to the success of any green roof project is choosing a contractor and landscape architect with proven experience. In addition to overseeing all design and engineering aspects, professionals who specialize in green roofs know which suppliers and manufacturers can be trusted to keep the installation of your green roof running on time and on budget. Contractors depend on a small army of suppliers for everything from roofing membranes and root repellent layering to irrigation systems and other specialty products.

Of the various components that ensure a successful, thriving green roof, perhaps the most important is the growing medium that will cultivate and nourish the vegetative layer. In short, choose the wrong soil mix and your green roof won't stay green very long.

Custom Mixes and Custom Service

How can you be certain that your green roof project receives the best soil available? The key is in custom soil mixes and custom service. Since no two green roofs are the same, "one size fits all" does not apply when choosing soil. Landscape architects, soil scientists, architects, and general contractors engaged in green roof projects should ask whether their soil supplier can:

- * Create custom-designed soil mixes that meet the customer's precise standards;
- * Accommodate the special requirements and demands of each project;
- * Provide an on-site delivery coordinator;
- * Package, store and deliver soil mixes around the customer's schedule.

Choosing a soil supplier that is located close to New York City will allow you better project management, enabling soil deliveries to be made on an as-needed basis. This is especially important since soil being used on a green roof project must be transported up multiple stories and cannot afford to become wet from sitting around a job site. Additionally, a supplier specializing in green roof soil mixes will work with you to develop packaging that meets your job's specific

requirements.

With sustainable building projects having been embraced by Mayor Bloomberg, the building department, the city council, and the borough presidents, it's clear that green roofs are here to stay. Choosing the right soil supplier can ensure that your green roof enjoys the same staying power.

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