

Urban Affairs: Dillo Dirt production to rise

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CITY: Dillo Dirt output to rise

Gardeners, landscapers and plant enthusiasts, listen up: There's a lot more Dillo Dirt to be had.

The Austin Water Utility announced last week that it would gradually double its production of the stuff, from 40,000 to 80,000 cubic feet per year, an expansion expected to keep pace with Austin's growing population.

Dillo Dirt is a soil conditioner made from wastewater sludge. It's packed with what plants crave, according to the city, which uses it on various public grounds. In 2009, after heavy rains soaked Austin City Limits festival-goers, a few complained that Dillo Dirt had made them sick, but city biologists said that was extremely unlikely and that the dirt poses no threat to human health.

Dillo Dirt is made at the city's Hornsby Bend Biosolids Management Plant. The city is using a \$31.8 million federal stimulus grant to expand the facility, including a new 15-acre composting pad for Dillo Dirt production.