



(from left to right): Mac Deschamps, Jacob Cookman, Kim Thompson, Chris Cookman



BREAKING NEW GROUND

Miryal™ launched at Greenbank Garden Centre Ltd., Ontario

STORY BY **Judi Bobbitt**

A north Durham garden centre is poised to launch an innovative plant growth complete expected to revolutionize the horticultural, agricultural and forestry industries.

Miryal™ is available at the Greenbank Garden Centre on Hwy. 12 between Uxbridge and Port Perry, where Kim Thompson, her husband Chris Cookman and son Jacob excitedly plan a future of getting it into the hands of anyone who wants to boost the efficacy of soils and help plants flourish, including: gardeners, landscape companies, farmers, plant/tree nurseries, and wetland restoration experts.

"I'm so excited, I thought the whole world should know about it," says Ms. Thompson, who purchased the garden centre with her husband eight years ago as a complement to their existing landscaping business, Stigma Style Landscaping Inc. "It's leading edge science meets business."

The product, called Miryal™, contains a living probiotic called mycorrhizae, which grows in close contact with plant roots

developing extensions of the roots system itself, with hair-like strands called mycelia. This helps the roots obtain and utilize more nutrients and water. It can be used on all plants, trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables, stimulating root tissues to respond and communicate under drought and disease stressors. Miryal™ positively influences plant performance in sandy, clay-based or compacted soils.

Miryal™ helps to sustain root systems and whole communities of plants, significantly reducing the need for synthetic fertilizer or allowing for the use of organic, sustainable sources of fertilizer with improved efficacy. What's more, it's beneficial to 95 per cent of plant families, while many so-called "weed" species fall into the five per cent of plants that won't be influenced, says plant and soil expert Dr. Leanne Philip. She likens plant root systems treated with Miryal™ to major transportation and social media networks working synergistically below ground.

"Mycorrhizae create a living network that manifests itself in many responses such

as plant productivity," she says, explaining that healthy, productive trees treated with the product could literally interact through their root systems with other nearby plants/trees and seedlings to strengthen their growth. "It's one of the most cutting edge leads in our field right now."

She says the commercial development of the product Miryal™ could mean sustainable increased food production, wetland regeneration and remediation. Additionally, Miryal™ can benefit urban planners, developers and homeowners, who aren't always matching the right trees and shrubs to depleted soils razed by construction and extremes in climate trends.

"You can use Miryal™ to restore and regenerate gravel pits and landfill sites."

Wineries, parks, conservation areas, multi-purpose greenspaces and climate change reduction strategies are other uses Ms. Thompson and Dr. Philip envision for the product.

The story of how a garden centre in

north Durham created Miryal™ began with Ms. Thompson's late-night Internet research as she dug into her business, and the reading she did on mycorrhizae, which has existed below the surface of the soil for millions of years. "I talked to one of our staff members, Reginald Philip", a long tenure math teacher in Port Perry, and "I kept telling him 'there's this wonderful thing called mycorrhizae', and he said, 'you should talk to my daughter'."

His daughter was none other than Dr. Philip, who did her doctoral studies at the University of British Columbia and worked extensively in soil sciences within Canada and Europe. The lucky connection meant Dr. Philip, now running her own company called Soil Advocates Inc., could tap into her own many professional connections from academia and the private sector, including Dr. Peter Moutoglis of BioSyneterra Solutions in Quebec, which now manufactures Miryal™ for the Cookman Corporation Inc.

With BioSyneterra's vast experience in researching, registering and commercializing plant probiotics, the group pooled their extensive expertise and talents, and worked as a team to bring Miryal™ to market in just 15 months, which Dr. Philip says is "unheard of. The Canadian regulatory boards are extremely demanding, strict, and time consuming." Through the dedication and vision of Ms. Thompson, Miryal™ is now a branded product, approved for sale in Canada and available to everyone.

"My company has pushed it forward. It's the opportunity of a lifetime for us," says Ms. Thompson, who becomes

emotional as she reflects on the collaboration of the team. "It's hard work ethic and passion...the hard work that's gone into this, the long hours, the dedication by all team members, from the scientists, the marketing professionals, the graphic artist to the printer."

The Cookmans are planning a business future for Miryal™ that will include their son Jacob, a horticultural expert, passionate and knowledgeable about the science of mycorrhizae and excited for the benefits to the environment. Jacob Cookman was trained at Niagara College, Niagara-on-the Lake, and continues to be committed to the development of new courses to assist in the educating of professionals. This important work is now being undertaken by scientists and professionals such as Dr. Philip as they establish new curriculum.

"Our whole being is about providing Miryal™ to help the environment," says Ms. Thompson. "Fate has had a hand in all of it. We're ready for this, the environment is ready for this, the world is ready for this."

Miryal™ is for sale at the Greenbank Garden Centre, on an application-per-pail basis, is priced at "less than a cup of coffee a day," says Ms. Thompson. A 6-litre pail with 25 cups of the product is priced at \$24.99, and a 20-litre pail with 84.5 cups will sell for \$98.99.

For more information, call the Greenbank Garden Centre, 19251 Hwy. 12, at 905-985-7667. Or email greenbankgardencentre@yahoo.com; soiladvocates@rogers.com.



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