

By **DAVID COLLINS**
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Buzz:
Bill
Biletzke

Who: Bill Biletzke, 40, of Mystic.

Why you should know him: Biletzke may well have been helping to keep a parking lot near you free from ice slicks during some of the thermometer-busting cold snaps and snowstorms this winter. Biletzke is a landscaper who this year became the king of Magic Salt™ in southeastern Connecticut, the exclusive distributor for a product promoted as great new tonic for the winter road blues. He has sold his magic elixir to the Mohegan Sun, put it down on school parking lots, sold it to colleges and is negotiating with some of the other owners of the region's biggest parking lots, such as Electric Boat in Groton and William W. Backus Hospital in Norwich.

Can you sell ice melt in July? Biletzke had his first introduction to Magic Salt™ last summer, when a salesman for the company stopped by his business, Mystic Landscape Services, on Sandy Hollow Road in Mystic. "The last thing I wanted to talk about in July was snow," he recalls. But come the first fall snow, Biletzke, who had told the salesman in the summer — "show me" — got a demonstration. He signed on for the regional distributorship. Then the Great Cold Winter of 2003-04 descended.

What so magical about Magic Salt™? It's made by blending an agricultural by-product of the distilling process with the mineral magnesium chloride. You mix it with rock salt. It's biodegradable and doesn't corrode salt-spreading equipment, bridges or parking garages, Biletzke says. It's environmentally friendly, since you only have to use half as much salt and you don't need sand in the mix. Not only does it clear up ice, but it even prevents it from forming if you pre-treat with the liquid before a storm, he says. "Rock salt is no good below 10 degrees. That's why (road crews) had so much trouble this winter. You put this down at five below zero and it will melt ice . . . It can melt ice up to 35 below zero."

Sort of like cookie dough: Homeowner-quality Magic Salt™ comes premixed in 20- and 50-pound bags, and Biletzke hopes to get it on hardware store shelves soon. The industrial-strength stuff is mixed with the salt by the ton. "We spray the pile, then turn it over with payloaders," he says.

Spring can wait: "This was a good winter to show what it can do," Biletzke says. "It's been a great year." ■



Tim Martin

Bill Biletzke is the owner of Mystic Landscape Services in Mystic and the exclusive local distributor of Magic Salt™.