



Just Naturals' products are made from natural plant extracts including lavender, mint and lemon.

Just Naturals & Co. offers a couple hundred different products including laundry detergent, shampoo, foaming hand soap and aromatherapy.

The company sells about 2,000 items a month.

# Doing Business Naturally

BY ERIKA COHEN

*Editor's Note: This monthly department profiles successful NH entrepreneurs and their businesses.*

**C**reating natural cleaning and beauty products from plant extracts is not only a green business model for Just Naturals & Co. in Amherst ([www.justnaturalproducts.com](http://www.justnaturalproducts.com)); it also brings in the green. The company has grown 20 to 50 percent annually since its founding five years ago. It offers hundreds of items including household cleaners, and laundry and beauty products, all scented with pure essential oils.

The natural path has brought founder and owner Karen Girardo success beyond NH. Last year, the company's products were part of the Daytime Emmy Swag Bags and featured three times in *Yoga Magazine*. Girardo and her eight part-timers assemble everything themselves under specific guidelines.

**BNH: Why make natural products?**

**Girardo:** "I had left a career in banking and health care to stay at home with my

school-aged son and had severe reactions to any and all chemical-based products: laundry, cleaning, housekeeping, beauty products. I was ... unable to lead a normal life at that juncture." That was more than five years ago. "Because I was unable to find great performing natural products, I decided to develop my own line and offer Just Naturals to the public."

**BNH: What makes your products unique?**

**Girardo:** "Anything that is scented in our shop is a pure essential oil. It is a plant extract. Rosemary-mint is our most popular cleaning scent and each blend has a special therapeutic benefit." She notes that foaming soaps, stick diffusers and laundry products are among her best sellers.

And all her products are free of toxins and safe for the environment. "Lavender in its purest form kills bacteria naturally. That's why it's great for laundry." Plus, she says, her top performing products cut cleaning time in half as they do the heavy lifting, thus eliminating the need to scrub counter tops, showers and other surfaces.

**BNH: How do you market your products?**

**Girardo:** Just Naturals partners with doctors, naturopaths, spas and other health professionals to educate people about natural products. Those partners also sell her products, though she says customers are her biggest promoters. "There are many opportunities out there and that's really where we're looking to go to expand our business." Education is also integral, Girardo stresses. "We will have people come in and do classes on, say, allergies. And our products can help with that. Now we are talking to like minded people."

**BNH: What are your plans for the near future?**

**Girardo:** Online sales now make up about 20 percent of the business with the remainder sold in the store or through partners or affiliates. She plans to open small satellite locations, offer limited wholesale opportunities and grow online sales.

"As we grow we will probably outsource certain things. "We've gotten many, many requests." ■