

SYNERGY

THE TERRACOTTEM ADVANTAGE

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SORTING McEVROY

If two people hadn't taken a risk, this story would never have been told. But they did, and thanks to them, it has a very happy, storybook ending...

Gosford City Council has its fair share of sportsgrounds (around 70 hectares worth), and in amongst them all is the three-hectare section known as McEvoy Oval at Umina Beach. Home to an unrelenting amount of activity, according to both Gosford Council's Active Open Space Co-ordinator Karen Tucker, and Project Officer Glen Howe, this sand-based ground has always found it hard to recover. As Karen describes it, "McEvoy Oval is used for touch football, little athletics, school athletics and soccer training. Typically it would be very difficult to maintain grass coverage on the 100 and the 400-metre tracks so that you couldn't find the lane lines. The grading was also a problem.. It wasn't an ideal site and it was only getting

worse." Explains Glen, "We'd be laying turf each year to patch it up and using a substantial amount of our water licence and still we'd have trouble stopping it breaking up."

Looking back, Glen admits that he'd heard about TerraCottem before Karen brought it up as an option. "There's a bloke here at Gosford who'd used TerraCottem while he was working at Blacktown, and he was always talking about how good it was on the garden areas and the trees. I'd just never had a situation to use think about using it, until McEvoy's." Karen had also talked to someone who'd used it. "I did my research and spoke to a couple of councils, including Newcastle City Council who was overtly positive about TerraCottem."

Applying and rotary hoeing in the TerraCottem.





Carol Devos (left) Andre Thienpondt (far right) and Russell James (centre) present the PLA TerraCottem Award 2011, recognising the work behind a successful project by Gosford City Council. The award goes to Gosford's Glen Howe and Karen Tucker who implemented a textbook installation with support from TerraCottem's certified installer, Geoff Green of Green Horticultural Group.

The idea then blossomed - to incorporate TerraCottem into the oval's annual beauty treatment. It was a big step, not only because no Gosford playing surface had ever been treated with it, but also because funds for oval renovations are traditionally tight. Says Glen, "We decided to risk it and luckily the gamble paid off. The wow factor is still there and everyone's loving it. You have to think, how good is this?"

Once the decision had been made, (and the funds secured) the process fell neatly into place because by coincidence, Gosford had already awarded the Green Horticulture Group, (TerraCottem's certified installer), the contract for the oval's annual maintenance works. TerraCottem was written into the specifications and Greens then delivered a textbook treatment: the usual sequence of digging, applying TerraCottem, working it into a consistent depth, levelling and rolling. "At times it seemed bigger than Ben Hur," admits Glen.

Was all the extra fuss and cost worth the result? "It's the best I've seen it for a long time. I was surprised that we had grass mid-winter at the end of the season. It's certainly an improvement because there are no areas that have blown out and that's because it's holding together."

Karen adds, "Thinking about before and after, the results have been outstanding. There's a significant thatch layer which we've never had before and very little evidence of use. The touch football sidelines show no signs of wear and while there are a few invasive weeds, the grass cover over the entire site is amazing. Clubs using the site have even called us with positive feedback as to the improvement of the quality of the grounds."

Glen's also happy with the water savings - now three mega litres less than their allocation. "And it's likely we won't be renovating this year which means a savings of between four and five thousand metres of turf. I now know what that Blacktown bloke was saying, and if I get the opportunity to use it again, I will."

Karen agrees. "My advice to anyone trying to stretch funds to do something similar, is to look at the comparative cost of ongoing maintenance over time versus the initial outlay for the renovation. We've seen significant reductions and at this stage expect minimal maintenance work to the oval at the end of its first season."

The turf goes down on a fully spec-compliant reconstruction.



THE TC ADVANTAGE

TC Advantage is a package deal. It's about supplying TerraCottem along with all the training, technical specification and compliance needed to turn a tricky project into a genuine long-term success. So when anyone has a turf, street tree or revegetation project to tackle, bringing in the TC Advantage expertise means you get training so that it's applied for maximum benefit; and monitoring to ensure compliance within the project's specs. As for TerraCottem, it's a brilliant soil-conditioning treatment because it works on several fronts at the same time...

To start with, it uses two main mechanisms to encourage substantial root development – copolymers and root growth precursors.

The copolymers are a little like water-holding crystals except that TerraCottem's hydroabsorbent copolymers have been carefully selected and well researched. This means that instead of just one polymer with a narrow water-holding and water-releasing ability, there is a group of them providing the same function over a wide range, for years. To put it crudely, more water can be stored and released under a broader variety of conditions.

As for the root growth precursors, by definition a precursor is a chemical compound which leads to another. The precursors found in TerraCottem do exactly this, and for a very good reason. If you put growth hormones into soil, they rapidly biodegrade. But if you put precursors into the root zone, the plants get a kick-start by synthesising their own growth hormones. And this conducive environment – for optimum cell division and elongation – stays like this for 12 months.

Then there is a nicely varied collection of plant nutrients – soluble mineral fertilisers, in a format suited to the early growth phase of a plant; slow-release fertilisers, designed to offer a constant source of food over many months; and synthesised organic fertilisers which focus on the soil, stimulating micro-biological activity and general soil health.

Add this all together and the result is fast and furious root establishment. This means greater accessibility to water, fewer losses, and, given the reciprocal dynamic between roots and canopy, noticeably vigorous growth. In the longer term, the soil-conditioning power of TerraCottem means that plantings are buffered from stress. It's great stuff.



TERRACOTTEM®