

SYNERGY

THE TERRACOTTEM ADVANTAGE

20

THE PEAR-SHAPED PROJECT

Imagine that you're standing on the sidelines, watching a project go badly pear-shaped. The reason that you are there - witnessing the unfolding disaster - is because you have a product and service to be applied at a set point in the proceedings. You also happen to have the experience and expertise that's needed to turn the pear into a peach. The question is, what should you do? Nathan Straume has faced just this scenario ...



A quick glance shows this project is unravelling: delivering sub grade while ripping isn't an ideal scenario.

Nathan's a technical specialist, and in this instance he was the horticultural expert sent along with the TerraCottem specified as part of a turf reconstruction in Queensland. Typically Nathan's involvement is very straightforward. He liaises ahead-of-time with the team that's responsible for the installation; he arrives on site to check the preparation works; and he calibrates the machinery that delivers the TerraCottem. And once he's comfortable that the team on site has it all under control, he waves goodbye. This system works because it keeps everyone happy. The client is happy; the installation contractor is happy; and Nathan's happy because he knows the TerraCottem has been installed so it will perform as promised. And if it performs, more orders roll on in. This partly explains why, when Nathan looked out over the site he'd just arrived at, he knew he couldn't let things stay the way they were. It was in

everyone's interests to offer his support.

"I was met at the airport by a guy whose background was a leading hand with a major landscaping contractor." (Tick.) Arriving on site, initially it all looked good, but taking a closer look around, it became clear that they were still profiling the ovals and weren't ready to apply the TerraCottem."

Over the next day the state of the project began to unravel further. The sub-contractors responsible for installing the ovals had won the contract as part of a Primary School upgrade. To cover the landscaping elements (their strength was in construction), they'd brought together a new team of experienced hands, but the managers of the overall project had little experience in sports field reconstruction. As well as this, the equipment on site wasn't fit for purpose.

This is only a small part of the total order of TerraCottem: which makes the scale of the spreader obviously inadequate: the ripper gets to work, eventually.



“They underestimated the scale of the project” – which is Nathan’s understated way of saying that the critical equipment was undersized. As an example, they’d provided two seven-kilo Scott’s spreaders and planned to use them to put out a half tonne of Terra-Cottem. “They weren’t using laser levels” – something Nathan twigged to when he saw a hump forming in the middle of the oval. (From the high point running from goal mouth to goal mouth, a hump was forming, crossing that at right angles.) As it turned out, the laser levels were out of action on the grader.

But the worst was still to be revealed. The days began to drag on with little progress as the team did their best to achieve the specified levels – a sub grade ripped to 75mm then the previously removed topsoil returned to achieve 150mm. For whatever reason, the call was made to get in about six semis at 20 cubic metres each to achieve the 150. Nathan – who had become part of

the team by default – suggested another survey. “I just asked if anyone had a laser level we could set because something wasn’t right here.” The result was gutting – they were over by 75mm. “They’d bought the extra needlessly and they’d wasted time. No-one was happy but everyone had the right intentions. We all felt we had to get this job right and do what we had to do.”

After several days Nathan had to leave but he returned and, following a frank and open discussion with the overall project manager, the job was re-worked and completed to spec thanks to the necessary resources and a much improved line of communication between all the parties involved. “These guys hadn’t done this before; they’d underestimated the time, the scale of the equipment size and the manpower they’d need. But they didn’t want the project to fail and they were very quick to recognize the expertise in their midst” (the team on the ground), “and turn things around.”

With projects of this scale it's all about the soil and the levels.



THE TC ADVANTAGE

TC Advantage is a package deal. It's about supplying TerraCottem (more about that in a minute), 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, revegetation or whatever project to tackle, bringing in the TC Advantage expertise means you get: advice on which TerraCottem product to specify; 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 various fronts at the same time...

To start with, it uses two main mechanisms to encourage substantial root development – polymers and root growth precursors. The polymers are a little like water-holding crystals except that TerraCottem's hydroabsorbent polymers 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. (To put it precisely for specification purposes: TerraCottem has an absorption capacity of a minimum of 4500 g H₂O/100 g in distilled water using Method of Analysis CEN EN 13041, with a minimum of 90% of the water contained in the polymers being plant available.)

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 microbiological 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®

TC Advantage P/L FREECALL 1800 658 281 Email: info@terracottem.com.au Web: www.terracottem.com.au