

# SYNERGY

THE TERRACOTTEM ADVANTAGE

# 26

## THE QUIET ACHIEVER

Some great projects are impressive, and not thanks to a chunky budget. In this success story it's all down to a quiet achiever. His boss describes him as proactive and forward thinking, someone who can picture the results and knows how to make them happen.

He's clearly the person you want on your team, but you can't have him since that's John Murray's\* privilege and (honestly) joy.



This is what happens when someone just gets on with the job, systematically planting to replace the missing understorey. It looks this good thanks to the TerraCottem that went in with each week's worth of plants, grown in the City of South Perth's plant nursery.

The project that best showcases the work of this Quiet Achiever sits in the City of South Perth, where John Murray is Streetscapes and Environment Supervisor. In the mid sixties (a bit before John's time), a relic of an earlier era – the McDougall's dairy farm – was handed over to the City to become public open space. Mrs McDougall remained living in the family home until she died in 1979, but in the years in between, she watched and took an active interest in the works that transformed the original paddocks and swampy area into the local landmark, McDougall Park.

But that was many years ago now. Despite periods of rejuvenation along the way it was time to do something, so at the beginning of this newest century, the major works kicked in. "Five years ago we embarked on

a significant refreshment: a new playground; exercise equipment; artworks; barbecues; and toilets. We also worked on the irrigation and the lake which had been constructed on the site of the old swamp."

The result was a seriously pepped-up park, one that is ready to meet the local's needs for many years to come. But there was still something lacking. "The original trees were there, but they were standing in their garden beds with very little growing in the understorey."

It was around this time that John Murray began being asked by the 'Quiet Achiever' for the key to the TerraCottem storeroom. The Quiet Achiever was clearly up to something and when John asked him where the TerraCottem was being used, all was revealed.

Rather than wait for the usual process – which takes time and allocated funds – this person had quietly been taking plants from the City's propagation nursery and planting them during his usual rounds. With John Murray's tacit approval, during his half-day on site at the park, and during scheduled maintenance, he and one other pair of hands were planting an average of 50 plants.

"Since they started, simply by chipping away at it, I'm estimating that they've managed to green up about 900m<sup>2</sup> of the bare beds. It's all natives – lomandras, anigozanthus, grevilleas, eremophila – which work in with the existing over storey of casaurinas, callistemons and a mix of eucalypts. Once the plantings started to mature, people noticed, and they commented. They started asking about what plant was what."

This case study is proof that sometimes there's a way to achieve great things with planting while working within existing budgets. "We've made a significant capital expense saving by doing it this way - through our maintenance budget." So thanks must go to the Quiet Achiever who made it happen – John Malone, Team Leader Garden Maintenance, City of South Perth.

McDougall Park has been given the full refreshment treatment from it's lake through to the playground pictured just below. Even the green aspect has been addressed thanks to the Quiet Achiever who appreciated that major capital works aside, the park needed to be filled with plants - something that's being achieved in bites - week, after week.



# 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 H<sub>2</sub>O/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](mailto:info@terracottem.com.au) Web: [www.terracottem.com.au](http://www.terracottem.com.au)