

# SYNERGY

THE TERRACOTTEM ADVANTAGE

## LOOK WHO'S USING IT

Delfin have a reputation for making the most of the natural resources of a residential development site – playing on its strengths, minimising disturbances and above all, creating wonderful environments for communities to enjoy. Given that they invest considerable effort to achieve this, it's not surprising that at Woodlands as part of this process, they specify TerraCottem to enhance the success of their landscapes.

Naturform landscape contractors work with Delfin to create these spaces. They know how well TerraCottem works, in this case at Woodlands, a project underway at Waterford (QLD), 30 kilometres south of Brisbane. Naturform's Peter MacLoughlin explains.

"We use it when planting gardens and street trees. Under drought conditions, our trees are still doing well. And it's true – we have minimal plant loss which we put down to TerraCottem assisting in this process. We're very conscious of water restrictions at Woodlands, and we're dealing with harsh soil conditions, so we know TerraCottem is helping the establishment of the plants."

And this claim is supported by what Peter sees when trees occasionally are replaced. "Where we've had damage to some of the trees we've planted – it happens and is part of the process of working within a building site – when we've lifted them to be replaced, it's obvious that the root development is advanced and the structure is very good."

Since arriving at Woodland's in late 2005, Naturform's job has been to revegetate the many reserves and marginal plantings using tube stock produced from locally harvested seed. The aim is to enhance and create a landscape which is natural as possible – "It's for people to appreciate and enjoy so we plant to encourage the birds and the koalas." Lophostemons, flowering and other gums, are all planted with TerraCottem as are some of the turfed areas. As well as this, mixed plantings in key locations get the treatment too.

And here comes the exciting bit - no irrigation is installed and everything is mulched with material which has been prepared on site. If TerraCottem didn't exist, Peter says they'd need to look at additional watering to supplement rainfall and support the plantings.

It's important to create green spaces for people to enjoy. In this case the green spaces include a large park surrounded with shade trees and planting, a playground, picnic areas complete with BBQ structures, and many parks and sports ovals planned in the future. The first trees were planted a



year ago, and since then have put on between one and 1.5 metres in height.

Peter is very aware that a little TerraCottem goes a long way – and to make certain it is applied at the recommended rates and methods, each Monday during 'tool box' meetings, as a matter of course Naturform go through various points to do with site requirements and where there are new faces in the team, some of the more experienced hands will run them through a session of professionalism – "how to plant and to stake and tie uniformly." Learning how to make the best use of TerraCottem is a part of this, but then this all comes as part of the service when you place an order...

Naturform's Peter MacLoughlin



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# BENEATH THE BOTANIC GARDENS

Not everyone gets an opportunity like this, to play a major role in creating a botanic garden from scratch. Listening to Acting Manager, Helen Paulsen talk about the birth of the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, you have not only a sense of the scope of the project, but also her joy at its success. And yes, TerraCottem has had something to do with it. But before we let Helen tell the story, it's worth setting the scene...

The earliest written records of the site show that John Mackay camped there on his journey of exploration. It next features during the late 1870s as a state government acclimatisation site where, on some of the best soils in the area, various economic crops were trialed from - sweet potatoes (a success) to apricots (not wildly so). In the years that followed 'The Lagoons' as its best known locally, served as the city's water reserve, a water treatment plant, the town soil supply, unofficial picnic precinct for the local landholders, sugar cane growing, and since the 1970s, open parkland. But by 1985 the countdown had begun, started by the increasingly vocal local chapter of The Society for Growing Australian Plants. A decade or so later, landscape architect Lawrence Smith was appointed to prepare the master plan and it was about this time that Helen joined the Mackay Council to help set the brief and source funding. Not long after, the site was agreed and works started in earnest...

"We began construction with phase one in May 2002 which officially opened a year later. The entire project is estimated at more than 14 million which will cover 48 hectares. Stage one cost 3.6 million and with that we were able to build not only the main administration building, the visitor centre and viewing deck, but also some significant garden areas - the Sarina Proserpine Range area, the Tropical Shade Garden, the Tropical Sun Lawn, the Malta Precinct, the Hedges and Screens Garden, the Japan precinct and a Regional Habitat Forest."

Stage two quickly followed with a further astonishing list of experiences, among them, "the Coal Gardens, the Torres Strait Islands precinct, Under the Banyan Tree Play Garden"; and stage three is now in the planning stage.

"When we first started out, there was definite resistance to spending this sort of money on a botanic gardens - people couldn't see the use. But within 18 months that had changed and the positive response has been overwhelming. I've people - grey nomads from the south - who make a point of stopping on a yearly basis because it's changing so fast that it's a pleasure to see."

There's only one sad note in this story, and that's the fact that Helen didn't have the chance to see TerraCottem in

action on her patch until late during stage one. But since the initial trial in mid 2003, TerraCottem has been used to plant everything in the Garden from stage two on, and it's now also specified by the City of Mackay in all its landscaping - street trees, gardens - as well as any commercial developments.

...They were literally double the size with more leaves and they looked much, much happier."

As for Helen's fateful trial, "I found a difficult bit of soil - compacted, windblown and dry - that wouldn't grow grass. We couldn't dig a hole with a crow bar so we brought in the back hoe. We applied the TerraCottem to all but two control sites, then planted tube stock. Everything was watered once a week for the first three months until the pressure to use staff elsewhere forced us to leave them to fend for themselves. And in that first year, all the treated plants not only lived but they grew 1.8 metres as compared with the remaining control plant (the other died) which grew to 900 centimetres. They were literally double the size with more leaves and they looked much, much happier."

This test, along with the results, was timely. Who would ever have thought water would be an issue in Mackay - but it is. "Since 2003 our wet seasons have failed us so that instead of 1.2 metres of rain we're only getting 600mm. Given our role in preserving many of the threatened, endangered and vulnerable local plant species in this area, we've had to ensure our collection is safe from drought, and TerraCottem makes this possible."

“ Tube stock planted with TerraCottem is better than using advance plant stock, because the boost it gets means it will double the other in size in 12 months. And there's no contest between spending \$1.85 and \$185.”





**THIS is unacceptable**

**If you are spending other people's money to grow trees, you should require above 95% survival.**

# THIS POSTCARD SAYS IT ALL

If you haven't already been sent one of these, then let us know and we'll pop one in the mail. But you probably get the idea – if you're spending someone else's money to plant trees or whatever, then you'll want a reasonable success rate. But often it's a case of money spent – on stakes, bags, mulch and labour – and still the plants die. Take a drive around almost anywhere you'll see plenty of these 'postcard' moments, and so does everyone else. If you want your trees to flourish even in the toughest spots, if you're sick of the waste, then check out TerraCottem. It's more than just a product and if comes with the support you need to get better results. And if you want to talk to someone who's already up with the TerraCottem Advantage, we can put you in touch...happy to.

**What's a precursor?** 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. So what's the big fuss about fast and furious root establishment? Think greater accessibility to water, fewer losses, and, given the reciprocal dynamic between roots and canopy, noticeably vigorous growth.

**Planting into sand?** Here's proof that TerraCottem boosts even sandy soils' ability to hold water. Sydney Environmental & Soil Lab recently ran various lab tests on some sand material for TerraCottem. Director Simon Leake's report, stated - "At all tensions the TerraCottem treated sand showed improved water holding ability. This improvement is highly significant at all tensions measured, about 56% increase at 50mm of suction and 78% increase in water holding capacity at 350mm of suction. This will make a very significant difference to the intervals between waterings, the water storage capacity of a sand profile and the ability of a sand to rapidly store incident rainfall or irrigation and hold it for plant use."