

DM company blooms with terraseeding

Unique method using compost grows lush lawns, co-owner says

By KRISTIN SENTRY
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Some say the grass is always greener on the other side, but the folks at Soil Tek might be the first to argue otherwise. That's because the northeast Des Moines-based lawn-seeding and erosion-control company is creating some dramatic results when it comes to growing lush green lawns.

"This is a revolutionary technique for growing a lawn that looks like it was sodded, but was actually seeded with compost injected with seeds," said Soil Tek president and co-owner Tom Truelsen. Co-owners Don Blumenthal and Brad Blackman round out their partnership.

Established in 2002, Soil Tek utilizes organic compost as the basis for all its work. With the aid of a large truck, composted material is blown onto an area. Seeds — ranging from local lawn favorites like Kentucky Bluegrass to wildflowers and native grasses — are injected into the mixture.

"The seed literally sprouts out of this material," Truelsen said. The process, which he calls terraseeding, is 40 percent less expensive than sod and creates better overall lawn growth by improving the quality of the soil underneath, he said.

Truelsen said the process is excellent for difficult areas like slopes or shaded lawns, where grass is harder to consistently propagate.

"Native grasses and wildflowers are a good option for a sloped area, and it looks nice as well," he said. The Department of Transportation and a growing number of residential construction companies are utilizing Soil Tek's solutions on many of their challenging areas.

Soil Tek offers a product for erosion control, which is a biodegradable sock filled with organic compost. Truelsen said the sock acts like a "biodegradable coffee filter" and provides effective erosion control without all the installation and cleanup effort required with a traditional erosion-control fence or rock.

"We used the socks to rebuild a stream bank in Ames, where the old solution would have been to put rock on the slopes," Truelsen said. "With the socks, we were able to get vegetation to grow again on the

Soil Tek

FIND IT AT: 4400 N.E. 14th St., Des Moines; 244-7474.

OWNERS: Tom Truelsen, Don Blumenthal and Brad Blackman.

SERVICES INCLUDE: Erosion-control and seeding processes using organic, environmentally compatible compost; seeding with Kentucky Bluegrass lawn seed, native grasses and wildflower mixes; athletic-field restoration; playground mulch.

banks while also cleaning the water."

Bart Weller, public works director with the city of Clive, works with Soil Tek regularly to solve many of his more complicated seeding and erosion issues throughout the city. "I especially like these compost socks because you don't have to go back and pick them up. They just decompose and go back into nature," he said.

"Their reseeded process is excellent for restoration work. We did an area half in sod and half with Soil Tek's terraseeding. The area greens up more quickly and comes up much thicker," Weller said. "Soil Tek does a good job, and they always come back to check any problems. We're very pleased with them as a contractor."

Truelsen said Soil Tek has become very competitive with other seeding and erosion-control companies, because industry trends are moving toward a greater use of environmentally friendly products. Typical clients include commercial construction companies, residents, and cities and municipalities. The company has opened an additional office in Cedar Rapids. Soil Tek recently put a bid on the green roof that will be added to the top of the new Des Moines Public Library, a potential contract that has Truelsen keeping his fingers crossed.

"We're not the cheapest method out there, but we do offer good results," Truelsen said. "Our goal is not to be the low guy, but to really be the best method out there."

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Tom Truelsen, president and co-owner of Soil Tek in Des Moines



WARREN TAYLOR/REGISTER PHOTOS

Soil Tek employee Matt Sage uses a giant hose to blow compost injected with seeds onto a work site at 36th Street and Washington Avenue last week. The method is excellent for difficult areas like slopes or shaded lawns, said Soil Tek president Tom Truelsen. At left, Truelsen, left, owns the company with Brad Blackman and Don Blumenthal, who is not pictured.