

“We’ve shined over the years when people say to us, ‘You cannot grow grass here.’”

— Soil Tek founder and co-owner Brad Blackman



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Taking aim: Anton Nichols of Soil Tek sprays compost and grass seed in a process called terra seeding, a sodding substitute.

To boldly grow where nothing has sprouted before

Soil Tek makes Filtrexx Filter Soxx, the orange or black mesh tubes used at construction sites to prevent soil erosion.

By **KRISTIN SENTRY**
REGISTER CORRESPONDENT

Chicago is home to the White Sox, and Boston holds bragging rights about its baseball champion Red Sox. But Des Moines recently is gaining a reputation for its “orange soxx.”

The highly recognizable bright-orange or black mesh tubes snaking around metro-area construction sites and guarding storm water sewer drains are a product licensed for use in Iowa by Soil Tek. The cutting-edge Filtrexx Filter Soxx have gained rapid acceptance in the local construction industry as an effective solution to soil erosion.

Soil Tek founder and co-owner Brad Blackman draws upon a military analogy when describing his company, which, to date, is best known for the “green roof” of the new downtown Des Moines library now under construction.

“Roofs, asphalt and concrete are all the enemy,” said Blackman. “There’s nothing better than natural vegetation for erosion control, and the construction industry is beginning to realize this.”

The Filtrexx tubes are filled with composted material.

According to Soil Tek President Tom Truelsen, the number of contracts and the size of the company’s operation have tripled in the past year. Popular products and services besides the filter tube is a lawn-growth process called terra seeding. The method blows organic compost mixed with grass seed onto an area as a substitute for sodding. Blackman and wife Kristin started the



Soiled sock: At right, Jared Bright, Soil Tek inspector, totes a Filter Soxx. Soil Tek co-owner Tom Truelsen, from left, Bradley Stanbrough of Stanbrough Real Estate and Home Builders, and Soil Tek co-owner Brad Blackman help put the Filter Soxx to use on a building site.

business in 2001, as a residential mulch-blowing operation called Groundscapes. Business was slow, so they expanded their services to include the Filter Soxx and terra seeding.

Not one to cringe at a challenge, Blackman said the company quickly established a reputation for its ability to boldly grow grass where none had sprouted before.

“We’ve shined over the years when people say to us, ‘You cannot grow grass here,’” said Blackman.

In the early days, the company lacked capital to expand, and costs for additional trucks and equipment were steep. Enter Truelsen and Brad Blumenthal, who saw potential in the company and formed a partnership with Blackman in November 2002.

However, Soil Tek’s key niche now is combatting and managing construction site

About Soil Tek

LOCATION: 4400 N.E. 14th Street, Des Moines
INFORMATION: Call (515) 244-7474 or go online at www.soil-tek.com.

OWNERS: Brad Blackman, operations manager; Don Blumenthal, partner; Tom Truelsen, president

FOUNDED: November 2002

SERVES: Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Omaha, Neb.

EMPLOYEES: 30

REVENUES: Declined to disclose

OPERATION: Specializes in environmentally friendly, compost-based solutions for erosion control and lawn seeding.

YOU KNOW THEM FROM: The Filtrexx Filter Soxx are the orange mesh tubes at construction sites and storm water sewer drains. The tubes stop soil erosion.