

Why Miracle Garden Tie?

There are cheaper tie tapes on the market. And I chose that word deliberately. So why would you want to pay more for Miracle Garden Tie (MGT)? And why that name anyway? Sounds rather sensationalized.

First some history:

The L.E. Cooke Co was a nursery started in 1944 in Southern California by my grandfather, Loren E. Cooke. My father, Bob Ludekens, joined him in the late 1940's and full time in the early 1950's.

Prior to the 1950's all nurseries, or anyone else, had for tying their trees to stakes were string products known as raffia. It did not stretch. That meant nurseries like ours that were growing straight trees by tying them to stakes had to cut off the ties to prevent the trees from girdling. And re-tying them. In the fast growing climate of California this could be every 3 to 4 weeks. By the way, "girdling" is the choking off the nutrient flow and disfiguring the trees. There had to be a better way!

A better way was found! In the late 1950's Bob went to downtown Los Angeles where he could meet with Dow Chemical and Dupont, two chemical companies who were just getting started in the relatively new plastics industry. He asked to see any materials that would stretch. With razor blades in hand, they would slice and stretch all kinds of sheeted material. They found a formulation they liked with lots of stretch and strength. That formulation, with minor enhancements, has been continuously used to this day.

They found Goss Manufacturing to take the bulk rolls to slice and re-roll the product onto smaller useable rolls. At first it was for internal use at the L.E. Cooke Co. Quickly word spread to other nurseries. I still have early letters from Hines and Monrovia (neighbors at the time) after trialing the material and praising this "*miraculous*" product. They wanted to buy it for their own use. Hence, a market was born and a name seemed fitting at the time. They never thought to patent it – it was a service to the industry. By the early 1960's, the L.E. Cooke Co bought its first slitting machine and moved the slitting operation in house – where it remains to this day.

How is it different?

Our formulation of the plastic uses more rubberizers and plasticizers to ensure the tie retains its long lasting stretch and strength. The largest competitors today are now supplying tape made in China or Taiwan. It does not have the long lasting stretch - if it stretches much at all.

1) To this day, the L.E. Cooke supplied **Miracle Garden Tie remains the #1 seller to nurseries and other commercial tree growers**, in spite of being a little more pricey. Why? For many nurseries that tie their trees to bamboo or stakes and commercial fruit growers that tie their trees to trellises (apple growers a big example), they need their tie to remain strong and

stretchy for 3-5 years or more. Miracle Garden Tie does that. The China tape hardens in the sun over a relatively short time and girdles the trees if kept on beyond a year or so. The China tape will work if you tie it and cut it off the same season (seasonal grape training a prime example). If you have tying needs for longer time periods, use MGT.

2) Hand Tie and Tapener Machine tie are the same product with Miracle Garden Tie. No need to carry two products in inventory (hand tie and/or machine tie) like with the competitors. Their hand tie does not work well in the machines because of how it is made. Those rolls come in long logs of the finished diameter and are “baloney sliced” by band saws. The saw cutting melts small amounts of plastic along the sides which stick to itself. That sticking creates havoc inside the Tapers and prevents smooth pulling of the tape thus creating misfeeds by the machine. Our Miracle Garden Tie is sliced by razor blades as it re-rolls off 500 pound bulk rolls onto the smaller rolls supplied for sale. MGT does not snag and bind up in the machine.



3) MGT is 100% American Made. For me and many others, this is important. The bulk rolls come from a plant in Texas that we have worked with for 30+ years. We have used good quality suppliers in Japan and Korea in the past and still have them as a backup if any hiccups in the U.S. We gave up a long time ago on China sources as incapable of keeping a consistent quality or meeting our standards. Besides, we like having the 3 weeks lead time from Texas to help us prevent usage spikes depleting floor stock. The 3-4 months lead time from overseas can sometimes be problematic. Patti prides herself shipping 98% on time same day if orders received by 1:00 PM. This quick re-supply helps lower your inventory investment on your own floor.

Personal observation: I am now traveling to our distributors telling this background story because there is a difference that “cheap” may not solve. Many have commented back along the lines of “maybe that is why my customers gripe about the tape we supplied as not satisfactory for their workers”. Most distributor sales staff are unaware of differences in the tapes being supplied. I hope this introduction opens the door to more understanding and happier customers.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Ludekens".

Ron Ludekens
President
L.E. Cooke Co