



THE A-ACAP PROJECT

Australian Alternative Covers Assessment Program

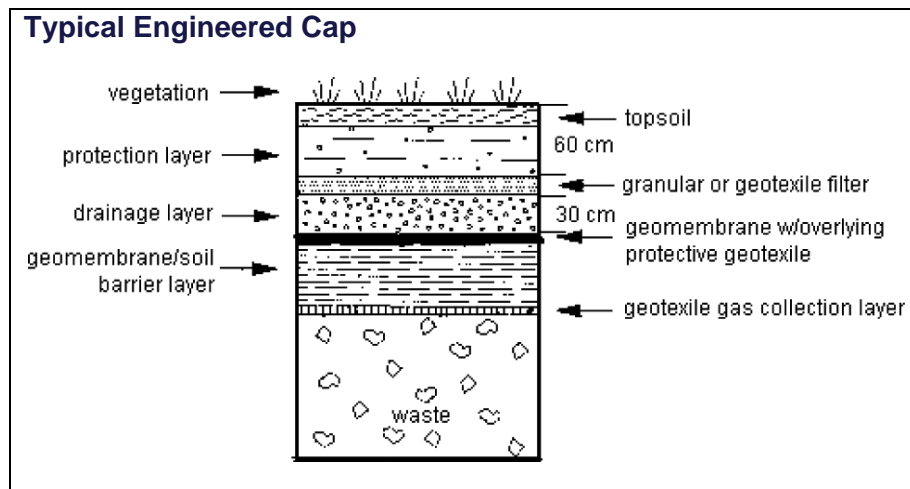
FACTSHEET

PHYTOCAPS FOR AUSTRALIAN LANDFILLS

Today's modern landfills separate compacted waste materials from the environment by use of liners – generally composites of clay and plastics– and engineered clay caps. They are meant to act as a 'raincoat' to keep out water.

The caps currently in use generally comprise compacted clays covered by a growth layer of soil and grasses.

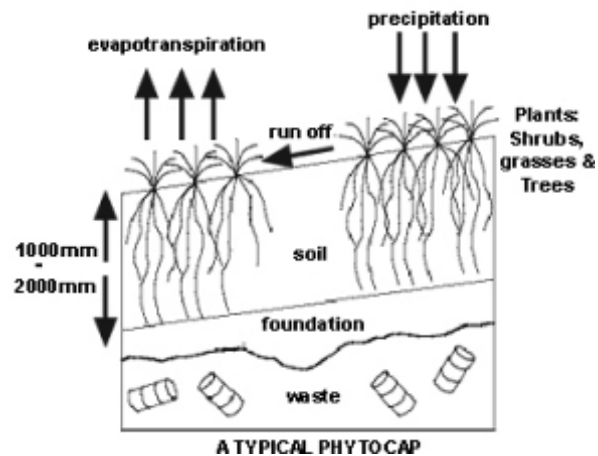
The hydraulic performance of caps is generally set at 75% capacity of the base liner. As a result, most modern caps are fully engineered with imported clays or made up of local soils and a plastic layer.



These requirements are often costly, promoting the search for new capping solutions which are now being trialled and introduced. One of these involves the use of phyto (or plant based) techniques.

WHAT IS A 'PHYTOCAP'?

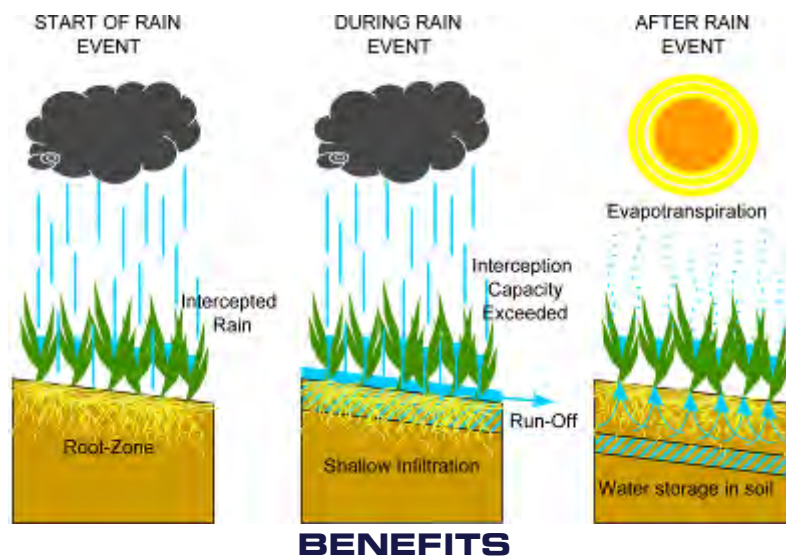
The use of phytotechniques is well established in waste management and the concept of a 'phytocap' for modern landfills is now being increasingly considered in the US and Australia.



Unlike the 'raincoat' systems, phytocaps are constructed with a 'sponge' layer that 'stores' water until it is 'released' by the natural forces of evaporation and transpiration, hence 'evapotranspiration'.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The phytocap achieves the same result as an engineered cap, but achieves this by the use of plants and an appropriately designed growing medium made from locally sourced materials.



The phytocap has several advantages over engineered caps, eg

- it is a natural 'structure' designed to operate in all climatic conditions;
- it requires less maintenance;
- it generally is less expensive to construct.

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