

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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More Room for Rain Wands ...

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... and all of the other products that Damm Corporation makes for growers and home gardeners.

About three years ago, Damm's brand new facility—still in Manitowoc, Wisconsin—was completed after they outgrew their original location on the other side of town. After looking at other properties in the area, they decided on a 16-acre lot in a business park next to a pond and restoration area. It offered Damm a chance to build their new facility from scratch and leaves some room for future expansion, too.

Along with 14,000 sq. ft. of brand-new office space, Damm now has 84,000 sq. ft. of warehouse and factory space to assemble, package and ship all of their water-focused products—everything from their popular Rain Wands and irrigation tools to water testing and sanitation equipment. They even produce organic liquid fertilizer made from kelp and processed fish scraps.

Damm also has a water-proof testing lab where they measure durability and shelf life for different products. For instance, when we stopped by, they were in the process of testing the run time of their lawn sprinklers and gauging how many times you can turn water valves on and off before they stop working.

When we visited in early February, the construction of a new R&D greenhouse was just completed and they were preparing for the irrigation testing projects that they'll be conducting with young and finished plants this spring. They'll also be growing their own plants to put in the landscape and containers around the property.

Kurt Becker of Damm said that they've been utilizing greenhouse space at a few local growers to test their products, but having their own R&D greenhouse allows them to have more flexibility. And before, they used to have their products spread out over three different warehouses in Manitowoc. Having to send multiple trucks to different locations every day wasn't the most efficient way to manage their inventory.

With a nice, new warehouse that has lots of space and high ceilings, Damm has also been able to invest in new automation and equipment to make some of their employees' everyday tasks easier. For instance, a new vacuum lift helps the shipping staff move large boxes around and stack pallets much better—no more bending and lifting.

The timing of the new facility was ideal, too. Just in Rain Wands alone, Damm produces over 750,000 a year and

January 2024 was the biggest shipping month in the company's over-80-year history. Now, they have the space to handle any level of supply and demand.

"This new facility really gives us the space to test our products for all of the different markets we serve," said Kurt. "And we've been able to think about everything we didn't have the space for."

Another factor that played a large part during the construction of the new facility—and is an on-going corporate initiative for Damm—was sustainability. Materials of the building frame contain up to 74% recycled contents and the building itself can be completely disassembled and recycled at the end of its life. The carpeting throughout the office was made from recycled fibers and can be recycled after its use. And outside, there are six vehicle charging stations and an array of 286 solar panels that provide Damm with about 90% of their energy needs.

"The whole idea was to be as environmentally friendly as we can," said Heidi Damm-Becker. **GT**