

How will waste wood behave underground? How promising is this light material as a drainage filter? The answers to these and many other questions are of immense interest to land reclamation experts of both countries.

Together with N.N. Koval'chuk, Director, Northern Scientific Research Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and Land Reclamation, and Jussi Saavalainen, Managing Director of the Finnish Enclosed Drainage Centre Company, we approached an operating drain-laying machine. A capron (synthetic fibre) drainage hose was laid in the trench in an even ribbon, while a stream of sawdust poured from above. A layer twenty centimetres thick, the experts believe, is quite enough for moisture to drain freely.

"Why did they pick this material"? I asked Nikolai Nikolaevich with interest.

"Before, we used to use sand in heavy soils. You see, a filter has to meet a whole set of requirements: it must be highly permeable, easy to transport and effective from an engineering standpoint in construction. Sand has all this going for it, but it's expensive, up to 15 roubles a cubic metre. So in both the USSR and Finland, engineers are looking for a sand substitute that's just as good."

Ju. Saavalainen joined our conversation:

"We began experiments on using chips and sawdust as backfill a long time ago. On the whole, our results were encouraging. But we weren't able to find such a large experimental site in Finland, where land is privately owned. And only after signing an agreement to build an experimental system near Leningrad will we do our tests more thoroughly."