

Grounds Management Newsletter

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION
landscapeontario.com



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Ground Maintenance Sector Group create strategic plan

By Anthony Kampen



Over the years, the Grounds Maintenance Sector Group has been very active. During that time many initiatives have been spun-off from the group. The Snow group began within the Grounds Maintenance group. It has now grown to become an independent and active sector group. Recently a sub-committee was formed to oversee

the Trial Gardens, thereby removing direct administration duties from the Group. These are positive developments, since they reflect the ongoing growth and maturation of our industry. However, it has left the Grounds Maintenance Group with a bit of an identity crisis. What is our purpose? How do we proceed? Where should our focus be?

To help us answer these questions, the Grounds Maintenance Sector Group performed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. This was a preliminary exercise to help us form a strategic plan in an attempt to align and integrate the activities of this group within all of Landscape Ontario, so that collective and better results could be attained through focused activity and efficient use of resources.

The analysis proved a worthwhile exercise, leading us to the development of a vision for the Grounds group, so that we may 'promote a prosperous, professional, ethical, recognized and trusted grounds maintenance sector.'

This vision requires that we focus on LO members by supporting business and technical programs of the association through promotion of existing endeavours, such as Prosperity Partners, the apprenticeship program, certification, environmental stewardship and the Smart about Salt program. We must also provide our members with real-world tools to help them in their business. We hope to raise awareness of products and processes that work well in our sector.

Fulfillment of our vision requires that we go beyond our own membership and pay attention to our external audience, namely the customer. It is important that we brand Landscape Ontario to the public and we hope to do this through a variety of channels. We will support of the Green for Life initiative by using the logo for all our collective points of contact. That's an obvious place to start, and will allow us to build on a foundation that has already been put in place. This can be further enhanced through the development of a detailed customer communication plan that promotes the use of professional members of LO. Further customer education programs that promote sound horticultural practices will enable the consumer to distinguish the professional LO member from the untrained competition, thereby raising our profile to the consumer.

Now that we have developed a framework to focus for our work, we can begin to apply our vision to areas of need within the industry. For the upcoming year, we will concentrate our attention on alternative pest control practices in the wake of the provincial pesticide ban. As a group, we feel that the ban has created opportunity and as such we hope to position our members to take advantage of that opportunity. Stay tuned for relevant information on products and processes that have proved successful for others in the industry. We will also provide marketing material that can be used to promote your business practices to the public.

We hope that a re-energized Grounds Maintenance Sector Group can be a benefit to your business. As always, we value your feedback and encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with any of the group members. Let's work together to promote a prosperous, professional, ethical, recognized and trusted grounds maintenance sector.

You can reach me at anthony@bootslandscaping.com.



Trial Gardens in 2009 expands in size and involvement

By Rodger Tschanz

University of Guelph trial garden manager

The 2009 LO Trial Garden season saw the program develop and expand in directions that I couldn't have anticipated at the outset of the year. The expansion of the garden to twice its original size started in the fall of 2008 with Grounds Management sector member John Hewsen taking the lead on roughing-in the beds.

During the fall and winter of 2008/09 a planning committee was created that included representation from the Ontario Parks Association, the Irrigation and Grounds Management sectors, the University of Guelph, GroBark and the educational and public relations staff of LO. Together, these committee members helped propel the activities of the Trial Garden to another level of usefulness to the industry.

Keith Osborne from Gro-Bark helped with the soil for the expanded beds; Al Nason's horticulture students from Notre Dame helped with planting and irrigation installation, thereby demonstrating another potential educational use of the gardens; Lorne Haveruk and friends installed and updated the irrigation system, providing some of the latest technology; the OPA sponsored a hanging basket trial and competition, which became part of the Trial Garden open house activities in August. I cannot finish talking about the support the trial gardens have received without mentioning the overwhelming support I receive every year from the LO and CNLA staff. This year Kathleen Pugliese, Robert Ellidge, Allan Dennis, Lorraine Ivanoff, Agnes Zawartka, Stephanie Smith, Denis Flanagan, Sarah Willis, Sally Harvey and Steve Moyer gave of their valuable time to help with various aspects of the trial season.

The 2009 trial gardens were expanded to include a trial bed shaded by trees in the boulevard area at the entrance to the LO home office property. This bed provided us an opportunity to plant and evaluate species that grow under natural shade conditions. New this year was an expanded growing area for perennials, as well as a small plot of vegetables that had potential for use in small urban gardens. The trial plants for 2009 came from a variety of sources: Sakata Seed, Goldsmith Seeds, PanAmerican Seed, Ball Horticulture, Darwin Plants, Proven Winners, Floranova, Ontario Seed Company, G. Sants and Blooms of Bressingham.

Open house day was on Aug. 20, at the Milton trial gardens. The horticultural industry was invited to an educational program and tour of the gardens in the morning and the public was invited to tour the project in the afternoon and evening. This was the first time the public had been

invited to the Milton trial gardens. The opportunity was well received by the visitors. Both groups of visitors voted on the favourite annuals and perennials; for the results of this voting please refer to the September issue of Horticulture Review. It would have been a perfect day if the severe thunderstorms and high winds had stayed away in the afternoon. But then we were lucky, as the area wasn't struck by the tornadoes that did hit Vaughan that same day.

Additional information about the 2009 trials can be found at the University of Guelph Trial Garden website: www.plant.uoguelph.ca/trialgarden. Contact Rodger Tschanz at 519-824-4120, ext. 52788, or by email at rtschanz@uoguelph.ca.

Profile:

Mike DeBoer

Maintenance supervisor,

Jan Gelderman Landscaping, Waterdown

Mike DeBoer is employed by Jan Gelderman Landscaping. With the company for 9 1/2 years, DeBoer began from the bottom up and worked his way up. "I took the two-year apprenticeship program and then completed my CHT. I have now worked myself into a supervisor/manager's position, in which I'm in my third year," says DeBoer.

"I have always had a passion for maintenance and dealing with people. I wanted to become part of a group, where I could learn and share through networking with others in our trade. Being the Chairman of the Grounds Management sector group has allowed me to share and learn with many others throughout our industry. The most challenging part of my job is training and managing staff and meeting client expectations."

Jan Gelderman Landscaping is a full service company, ranging from design build to maintenance and snow. Currently there are 73 employees in the summer and the company maintains 43 on fulltime year-round basis. "We cover a large area from Stoney Creek-Mississauga and up to Cambridge and Milton," says DeBoer.

When asked to reflect his most humorous client encounter, he said that it was quite recently, when the customer complained that his basement was leaking because staff wasn't cutting the grass short enough.

New Product:

TurfEx MS4500 Topdresser



TurfEx introduces a 1.4 cubic-yard capacity topdresser. The MS4500 trailer-mounted unit has the ability to spread a variety of bulk materials, including compost and soil conditioners.

It features large flotation tires and exerts 18 psi when fully loaded, allowing safe operation on delicate surfaces. Another feature is that it's a completely electric-powered unit. This eliminates the possibility of hydraulic fluid leaks that can burn grasses and greens. It also equals quieter operation than gas engine or hydraulic powered models, and further reduces weight, maintenance requirements and fuel consumption.

The MS4500's spreading ability, makes it ideal for lighter, more frequent applications. The unit includes an 18-inch steel spinner with adjustable fins that angle to accurately direct material spreading. An electronically controlled flow gate and dual-variable speed controller with digital readout allows precise material feed and spread pattern.

When the machine is activated, the spinner engages first, followed by the flow gate and lastly the auger. This ensures the spinner is clear and spinning before receiving material, eliminating piles from forming onto the turf. When powering down, the components disengage in the opposite order – with the spinner stopping last – to eliminate the same result. A standard vibrator breaks up clumping and further enhances consistent material flow.

TurfEx offers two other topdressers, the MS1875 and MS2000. Designed to mount on tractors or utility vehicles,

the units are equipped with an auger for feed and control of bulk material, including compost, pelletized lime, topdressing, and other granular products. The MS1875 offers a 9 cubic-foot capacity hopper with a 3-point hitch mount, while the MS2000 has an 11 cubic-foot capacity hopper and mounts to the bed of utility vehicles.

TurfEx website is www.trynexusfactory.com.

The sector group doesn't favour any one product, but wants to encourage the membership to investigate options that will allow them to succeed in the new reality of pesticide-free grounds maintenance.

Anthony's picks for Congress 2010



Newsletter editor Anthony Kampen gives his picks for what grounds management people should look for at Congress 2010.

- IPM symposium: To learn what is going on in the field and to keep abreast of the most recent research developments
- 'Risks and Rewards of Change' seminar: Since our industry is undergoing unprecedented change, especially with the pesticide issue
- Landscape Weed Control: More Bite to Bark. To see if this is perhaps a tool that can be added to our toolboxes, as we seek to combat weeds in the garden
- Practical Eco-Solutions for Sustainable Landscaping: In order to position your business to take advantage of the new trends that are developing in our industry

I would also encourage attendees to spend quality time on the trade show floor, evaluating the products and equipment on display to see whether they are things that can help change and/or grow their business. Go to the Awards of Excellence program to be inspired by your competitors and perhaps get the competitive juices flowing. Also, go to the AGM to show support and keep informed of the business of the greatest horticultural trade association in the world.