

THE OTTAWA SAGA

Non Use of Herbicides

by Dick Standish,
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For those in the world that do not know, the City of Ottawa stopped using herbicides in 1978. Many reports were produced and the 2,4-D issue was discussed repeatedly and the ban was upheld by Council year after year.

By the early 1980's weed growth had continued and alternative weed control methods were being studied. Grants were offered to the user groups of the sports facilities to carry out a hand-weed project. Several groups took this opportunity to gain financially with the grant system but did not adequately perform weed control. The weeds were growing in the outfield of a ball diamond which had hard, compact ground that would support weed growth but little turf.

The greater percentage of weeds consisted of dandelions, plantains and knotweed, which are difficult to remove with the root system. Consequently, the user groups were just removing the top growth and not the root, therefore not completing an adequate weed program. Most of the groups became discouraged before completing half of the outfield. As the area was 80-90% weeds there was just bare ground left. This weed control method did not prove satisfactory.

The city looked for assistance in 1982 from the Guelph Turfgrass Institute. Dr. Lee Burpee, Dr. Chris Hall and Mr. Pat Tucker visited Ottawa and toured some of our green space to acquire a first hand knowledge of the existing conditions. A

report was produced which stressed the importance of a good turf management program (aerating, dethatching, fertilizing, top dressing and overseeding), complete with limited use of herbicides. The report was accepted and the turf management program was instituted in 1983, but with "no" herbicide use.

The turf management program continued throughout the 1980's with the percentage of weed cover increasing and the turf cover decreasing.

In 1991, as most parks were weed covered, the turf management the turf management program was only carried out on newly developed parks and will continue until they become weed infested.

The Guelph Turfgrass Institute was approached for a return visit in 1992 to again review the present condition and recommend what course of action we should take. (*Ed. Note: That report may be briefly summarized in five words - "what was bad is worse"*).

The surprising thing is there are few complaints from the user groups regarding the existing field conditions. All facilities are booked full-time for the season, regardless of the conditions and the weather.

The positive side is that the facilities are used fully with very few complaints regarding the surface condition (turf?).

Is it bad to have playing fields that are totally weed covered if they are used to the maximum?

(Reprinted from: *Green Sward* 13: No. 2, pp. 12, April, 1992)

1992 SPORTS TURF FIELD DAY

The 5th Annual Sports Turf Association Field Day was hosted by the University of Western Ontario on June 17, 1992. This year the Field Day was moved outside the golden horseshoe to London in an effort to reach the many turf managers and equipment distributors in southwestern Ontario. The event was well attended, with sunny skies and warm Western hospitality ensuring delegates and distributors a pleasant, informative day.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Jack Eggens of the University of Guelph. True to form, Dr. Eggens held his audience captive; striking fear into some turf managers maintenance programs, while reassuring others. He was well received and provided many insightful comments

and observations regarding sportsfield turf maintenance programs. His hands-on knowledge and congenial wit kept all delegates entertained and on the edge of their seats throughout the presentation.

The morning session offered a panel discussion with speakers representing the private, municipal and educational sectors. Mr. Doug James from the London Public Utilities Commission spoke on their operations and the methods and success at keeping the public informed about their maintenance schedules. Mr. Ron Barnes from the London Board of Education articulated his turf maintenance program and their system of communication, especially in regard to herbicide spraying, between the Board and users of the sports facilities. Mr. Vic Palmer from the Green Team gave an informative discussion on the various facets of private industry, its challenges and rewards. One dominant theme which surfaced in each of the speakers presentations was the need for superior communications between the public and

municipalities, school boards and private contractors. Furthermore, in these times of fiscal restraint, it is important for all turf managers to ensure the public are receiving value from the turf maintenance programs; and be proactive in maintaining harmonious relationships between turf managers and users of recreational or sports turf.

We were fortunate to have an excellent indoor trade display and outdoor equipment demonstration. There was a broad spectrum of horticultural products and a full range of turf equipment. Sincere thanks to our valued suppliers whose participation is integral to the success of our Field Day.

Special thanks to our host, Jim Galbraith, and his staff for all their hard work on the Field Day. It was a job well done.

Once again our thanks to all who attended the Field Day and we will see you at York University in June, 1993.

Chris Mark, STA Director
Field Day Coordinator