

# A Key Player in the Turfgrass Industry

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GUELPH TURFGRASS INSTITUTE

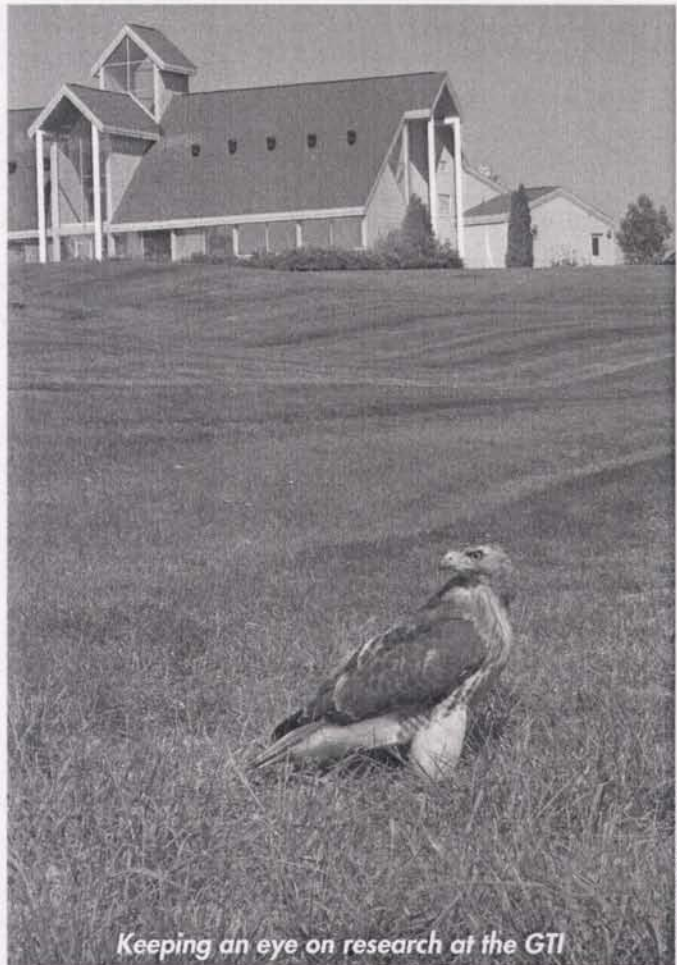
**T**he Guelph Turfgrass Institute was established in 1987 to conduct research and extension and provide information on turfgrass production and management to members of the Ontario turfgrass industry. Located at the University of Guelph, the institute is supported by the University, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the turfgrass industry. The first of its kind in Canada, the institute is recognized as a centre for research, extension and professional development.

Research faculty and staff at the GTI are drawn mostly from departments at the University of Guelph with an interest in turfgrass, such as plant agriculture (crops, horticulture and biotechnology), land resource science (soils), and environmental biology (pathology, entomology, weed science).

Building on the University of Guelph's long-standing expertise in turfgrass science, the Institute continues to focus its activities in areas such as the environmental aspects of pesticide use (fate and persistence), evaluation of grass species, varieties and seeding methods, sports field construction, fertility and management programs, pesticide use and the biological and cultural control of diseases and weeds.

The Guelph Turfgrass Institute's mandate is

- to expand and enhance turfgrass research for Canada's \$1 billion turf industry



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- to expand extension and information services
- to encourage and prepare young people for careers in the industry and in research through undergraduate and graduate programs
- to develop a world-class turfgrass facility

### The GTI's G.M. Frost Research and Information Centre

The Research and Information Centre, opened in January 1993, serves all sectors of the industry and the public. The building is strategically located on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Guelph Research Station, one of several research stations owned by the province and operated by the University of Guelph. The building provides a focal point for the continued development of turfgrass science and the turfgrass industry.

### Research Infrastructure

The Guelph Research Station covers about 200 acres bounded by the Eramosa River on the north and east, and by Victoria and Stone Roads on the west and south. The GTI currently occupies about 53 acres of this, and there is a long term site master plan for the whole area.

The research plots on site were developed specifically to service research into turfgrass and related landscape problems, with appropriate state-of-the-art management (equipment, irrigation, evaluation tools). Field plots include research on turfgrass soils and fertility; sod production and management; evaluation and selection of varieties; control of weeds, insect pests and turfgrass diseases. The field plots and field laboratory facilities on the 53-acre site provide researchers with the tools to

generate new approaches to turfgrass production and management.

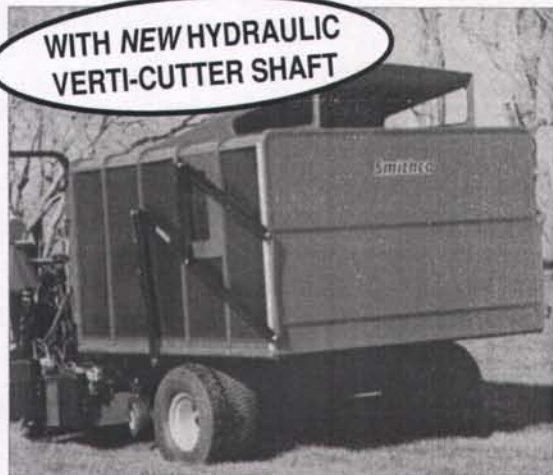
The first phase of development included the large research ranges, 16 ranges, each 25 x 100 m and separated by grass roadways. This area was land formed and topsoil replaced to provide uniform conditions for research plots. Five of the 16 ranges currently have in ground automatic irrigation; quick-connect valves provide manual irrigation to the rest. The first phase also included three putting green research areas. Two are USGA greens, each with one half constructed with low pH (siliceous) sand and one half with higher pH (calcareous) sand. The third is a push-up green constructed with sand which was found onsite during development. A fourth green was constructed in 1999 using the California-style design. A large (10,700,000 litres) irrigation reservoir provides water for the irrigation system which irrigates the research ranges, greens and landscaped areas around the buildings and pond.

Other research infrastructure includes a set of lysimeters, the Canadian Centre for Toxicology's mesocosms for studying toxicology in aquatic systems, and a filtered irrigation loop for drip irrigation (originally installed for a high density orchard, but now put to other uses).

The GTI shares the Research Station with other users, such as the Centre for Toxicology, woody nursery plant re-search, and the Agroforestry program at the university. Recently there has been an undertaking to integrate turf with other ornamental and woody plants in an urban ecology program, both on campus academically and at the GTI. The trial gardens on display are part of this effort. ♦

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