

STA Member Profile

Dennis Wale • Foreman of Horticulture & Turf • City of Brantford



1. What is your role with the City of Brantford?

My title is Foreman of Horticulture & Turf with the Parks & Recreation Department.

2. What kind of team do you work with?

I work with a team of qualified and dedicated staff that ranges from longtime/fulltime staff, experienced seasonal workers and enthusiastic students. At present, we have 2 leadhands, 2 gardeners, 2 journeymen, 1 apprentice, 2 operators, 20 students and 18 seasonal staff.

3. What are you and your team responsible for?

We are responsible for the following: 12,000 sq ft greenhouse complex growing approximately 250,000 annuals and various specialty crops; planting all of the municipality's floral displays; both indoor and outdoor landscaping; and maintaining over 500 acres of turf, over 50 km of trails, and all roadside grass cutting. We also do the majority of our training for job specific responsibilities.

4. What is the biggest challenge in your job?

Being able to provide quality service throughout the municipality. Our facilities are across the city so travel time as well as wear and tear on equipment is a challenge. Another challenge is providing the proper orientation and training for 38 seasonal and student employees.

5. What is the most satisfying part, what makes the job worthwhile for you?

The positive impact the department has on the community from the quality sports fields, beautiful trails and the floral displays across the municipality.

6. What is the biggest misconception about your job?

I think the biggest misconception is that City employees don't work hard. Our staff are among the hardest working and dedicated I have ever encountered.

7. What is your educational/employment background?

I started with the City of Brantford as a student in 1978. I was offered an apprenticeship and have been here ever since. I have apprenticeships in horticulture nursery/greenhouse worker, landscape/greenskeeper with the Ministry of Skills Development, and horticulture landscaper with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. I also have a certificate in business management skills from the Ontario Management Development Program (OMDP) along with several distance education programs in horticulture.

8. Tell us about your family.

I have been happily married to my lovely wife Margaret for 27 years. Margaret is the Coordinator of Student Services at Mohawk Brantford. We have 2 adult children. Amy, 26, is a teacher and our son Michael, 23, is an apprentice sheet metal mechanic.

9. What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Hobbies, favourite past times?

I like to keep active. I enjoy curling and am a member of the Brant Curling Club. I run and compete in various races (10 km to 26 km) throughout the season. I also enjoy recreational cycling.

10. How has the industry changed and in what direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards?

The changes I have noticed are more emphasis on quality turf, i.e. better use of cultural practices, and more focus on training and safety for all staff – particularly our students and seasonal staff. The efficiency of the equipment available has provided opportunities to get more done with what we have. I think that it's important that the industry as a whole continue to partner with related organizations in order to better reach and inform all of our professionals.

11. What do you consider to be the biggest benefit of being a member of the STA?

I find networking with members very useful, and appreciate the training and resource opportunities provided by the STA. ♦