

Member & Facility Profiles

THE SPORTS TURF MANAGER VISITS YORK UNIVERSITY

Up Front With STA Member Tim Haagsma

What is your role with York University? I'm Manager of Grounds, Fleet and Waste Management.

What kind of team do you work with? I have 3 supervisors that report directly to me. Under them, there are 39 full time unionized staff, 3 part time staff and 14 summer students.

What are you and your team responsible for? I am responsible for the maintenance of the grounds (roughly 550 acres), including 6 sportsfields and 4 baseball diamonds, as well as all waste management at the university. I am also responsible for the procurement and maintenance of the fleet to support these services.



Tim Haagsma. Manager of Grounds, Fleet & Waste Management, York University

What is the biggest challenge in your job? Budget cuts! We are constantly working on ways to increase productivity and efficiencies while balancing harmonious labour relations. Additionally, the intensification of our campus landscapes (converting from large areas of turf to elaborate plantings) is a major challenge. Upper administrators do not understand the additional workload involved with this. Finally, the elimination of pesticides to help control weed problems, especially on our turf and gardens, has been a significant setback.

What is the most satisfying part, what makes the job worthwhile for you? Completing a project on time and on budget!

What is the biggest misconception about your job? That it's easy! Ha! This is a good question! I guess it would be that I like to sit around in my office all day; meanwhile, I much prefer to be out in the field.

What is your educational/employment background? I received my B.Sc. (Agr) with a major in entomology and minor in international agriculture from the University of Guelph in 1988 and started to work at York University in the Grounds Department the same year. I worked my way up from groundskeeper to lead hand and then horticulturalist prior to becoming manager in 2003.

Tell us about your family. I'm married to Julie and live in King City happily maintaining my two acres of solitude!

What do you enjoy doing outside of the workplace? Believe it or not, gardening is one of my favourite past times. I am an avid cyclist and love to get away on fishing trips – the more remote the better!

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

I have seen many changes over the years, especially the shift away from pesticide usage, as well as a major increase in liability concerns. I would like to hope that we will end up with a more sustainable vision in the future for how we maintain our landscape.

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

Easy access to information for our local turfgrass industry.



If you are interested in being featured in this column, please contact Lee Huether at the STA office.



Photos courtesy of John Wilson.

YORK UNIVERSITY, KEELE CAMPUS, TORONTO

What types of sports fields are on site? Five playing fields, including one event stadium, as well as four baseball diamonds.

How many employees are involved with turf care at this facility? 30.

How many acres of turf are maintained at this facility? 180. **How many acres of sports turf?** 25. **What percentage of this acreage is irrigated?** 10% of the total maintained.

What is the primary type of turfgrass? Generally Kentucky bluegrass, though we overseed our sportsfields with the following mix: 50% IQ perennial ryegrass, 25% Accent perennial ryegrass and 25% Goalkeeper 2 perennial ryegrass. Our general turfgrass overseed mix is currently 40% perennial ryegrass, 30% creeping red fescue and 30% Kentucky bluegrass.


Is yearly overseeding part of your maintenance program? For sure!
How many times do you fertilize? General campus, twice/year. Sportsfields, four times/year. **Do you aerate? Topdress?** Yes to both.

Are community user groups involved or have they been involved in the construction/maintenance of this facility? No, although the sportsfields are rented out as a revenue generating strategy.

How many hours per year are the fields permitted? This is dependent on the particular field and the activity being proposed. In general, I would estimate each field is used approximately 600 hours, with 300 hours on our main event field. **Who permits them?** The Athletics Department.

Are the fields ever closed during the season to give them a rest? Generally, each field is closed for approximately six weeks to allow major renovations on a rotational basis.

How much input do you have in the amount and timing of use? This decision is made by the Athletics Department, in consultation with me. Generally they understand when I explain to them that the quality of the field is in direct correlation with the use (or overuse) of the field.



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