

# Facility Profile

## SUNNYBROOK PARK SPORTS FIELDS, CITY OF TORONTO, ON



### General facility information:

Sunnybrook Park is a 60 ha property that serves users from across the City of Toronto. It is connected to three other large parks in the Don River watershed, Wilket Creek Park, Serena Gundy Park and E. T. Seton Park, that combined total 235 ha of parks, accessible by transit, but with parking for 1,000 cars. There are permitted picnic sites, horse stable, walking/hiking trails, the sports fields and a Parks Operations service yard on site.

### What types of sports fields are on site? Natural? Synthetic?

All fields are natural living turf and are:

- 4 premier field hockey / multipurpose fields
- 3 premier soccer fields
- 3 premier cricket grounds
- 2 premier rugby fields
- 1 Ultimate Frisbee field

All fields here have a sandy loam soil texture. Mowing height on seven of these premium fields is 1.5" by multi deck (7) floating head rotary mower. Mowing up to 3 times/week as required so as not to remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade in any one cut. This same mower and operator go 2.5 km up the road to cut the playing surface of five baseball diamonds at Bond Park twice/week. Cricket grounds have a synthetic turf pitch area in the centre. We also have a synthetic turf area with 5 practice cricket pitches.

The fields for soccer and rugby are mown at 2.5", the same as the remaining park land. The crew has access to a wide area 16' rotary mower and operator from a flying turf crew as required. The sports fields and pavilion area are part of the fly crew wide area mowers 50 ha/week cutting schedule.

North York District staff has been maintaining the premier sports fields at Sunnybrook Park without synthetic pesticides, applying only organic fertilizer products, and following a turfgrass specific Integrated Plant Health Care (IPHC) program for the past 14 years. The cultural practices of fertilizing, aeration, overseeding and topdressing, along with timely irrigation and mowing with sharp bladed equipment are the main components of the program. Communication and cooperation with users so as not to use the fields during inclement weather, also helps immensely.

Insect pests have been mostly Japanese beetle, and are controlled by inoculating the soil with parasitic nematodes for three years running a few years back, and now

by using pheromone traps to catch the adult beetles before they lay eggs. We catch thousands of adult beetles annually to keep them under control.

There is also a field house pavilion building, with a meeting room and washrooms.

**How many employees are involved with turf care at this facility?** The Sunnybrook sports field crew is made up of:

- 1 Permanent Lead Hand Parks that works at Sunnybrook in summer for 36 weeks then works at an outdoor artificial ice rink in the winter
- 1 Permanent Parks Handy Worker grade 2
- 2 Seasonal Parks Handy Worker grades 3 for 25 weeks each
- 1 Seasonal Parks Handy Worker grade 3 for 16 weeks

This group cleans up, cuts, trims, and paints lines on all the fields. They also cut and trim the perimeter around the fields, and some additional parkland within Sunnybrook Park. They set up for special events and help maintain the field house... they are a very busy group. A dedicated Turf IPHC crew that covers the entire North York District comes in to do fertilizing, aerating, overseeding and topdressing on a prescribed schedule.

**How many acres of turf are maintained at this facility? How many acres of sports turf?**

55 acres of turf on the plateau area that includes 30 acres of irrigated sport fields.

**What is the primary type of turfgrass? Name of varieties.** There is a mix of species and varieties depending on the height of cut. On the fields cut at 1.5" for cricket and field hockey we have 50% perennial ryegrass, 20% annual bluegrass, and 25% Kentucky blue. We still have a component of white clover in these fields. The fields for rugby and soccer, cut at 2.5", are more perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass in equal parts.



Sunnybrook Field Hockey, Multi-purpose Field

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**Is yearly overseeding part of your sports turf maintenance program?**

Yes, our current standard for overseeding on premier fields is 4 times/year. Slit seeding in early summer and fall with an irrigated field seed blend. The same blend is used on our Class A and B fields: 25% Arrowhead Kentucky bluegrass, 25% Yankee Kentucky bluegrass, 30% Cardinal creeping red fescue, 20% Stellar perennial ryegrass at 75 lb/acre.

In summer the standard calls for 2 slit seedings of a 3-way perennial ryegrass mix: 33% each, Charismatic perennial ryegrass, IQ perennial ryegrass, and 34% Affirmed perennial ryegrass at 115 lb/acre.

We use a different seed blend for non irrigated Class C fields: 40% Boreal creeping red fescue, 40% Jamestown IV chewings fescue, and 20% Primary perennial ryegrass at 90 lb/acre.

When we procure turf grass seed blends all must contain varieties from the most recent NTEP trials so we may confirm the desired growth characteristics and qualities of the proposed blend.

**How many times do you fertilize?** Four applications of fertilizer on premier fields. At this site we use only organic 4 – 1 – 2 at 560 lb/acre to continue with the long standing organic program. At other fields we use synthetic fertilizers with XCU and polymers coated urea forms, but still have at least one annual organic fertilizer application on all classifications of fields.

**Do you aerate? Topdress?** Yes, as soon as we can get the irrigation heads up and marked we will aerate with either hollow tines or solid spiker tines depending on permits to use the fields. Four aerations per season, on these premier fields and the fall aeration is always hollow tine.

We topdress all fields at specific rates but these premier fields get topdressed with a 70:30 sand to ¼" screened compost blend applied at 44 yd<sup>3</sup>/ha in summer for 1/8" coverage, 88 yd<sup>3</sup>/ha in fall for ¼" coverage.

**What is your maintenance regimen for synthetic turf?**

The synthetic pitches in the cricket fields require minor surface repair after 1 - 2 seasons, significant repair after 2 – 3, and entire fabric replacement after 3 – 5 seasons.

I get my first synthetic turf field installed in 2014, at a location that was getting over 1,200 hours of permitting, plus some unauthorized use. It was a tough site to keep green. The City has four stadium fields with synthetic turf that easily handle up to and over 2,000 hours of permitted use. We also have six non stadium, outdoor synthetic fields in Toronto parks.

**How many hours per year are the fields permitted? Who permits them? Are the fields ever closed during the season to give them a rest? How much input do you have in the amount and timing of use?**

The fields at Sunnybrook get an average of 700 hours of use a season. The fields are not lighted. We keep one soccer field at rest at all times, and rotate play as needed during the season. The season is 21 to 22 weeks long. We open living turf sport fields on the second Saturday of May annually and close September 30. Baseball diamonds at other park locations open May 1 annually and close September 30.

Field permits are available through the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Customer Service branch and they work more and more closely with Parks Operations to communicate with users, getting the word out when fields are closed for any reason, and trying to relocate groups and arrange rain out dates whenever possible.

We are implementing a new protocol about sports field playability and responsibility guidelines in 2014 that will improve issues related to field use during inclement weather, user safety, and potential for field damage. The Customer Service staff will have sent those guidelines to all sports field permit holders before the 2014 season begins.

We have a phone line at Sunnybrook for permit holders to call in; we update the field conditions, if anything is closed due to wet conditions and we have staff on site to uphold the conditions of the permit related to limiting use under poor field conditions. •