

STA Member Profile

Tanya Steffler • Parks Pest Management Technician • City of Oshawa

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

In the capacity of the Parks Pest Management Technician, I implement the Pest Management Plan (PMP) for the City. The plan involves technical support, analysis, guidance and development of turf maintenance for sports fields and parks within the City of Oshawa. The PMP also includes our public education and outreach program. I direct the grass-cutting contractors and deal with public complaints/enquiries regarding grass or pests.

2. Provide some details about the Pest Management Plan.

The PMP was approved by Council in 2003. It is a five-year plan with a goal to reduce and eliminate the use of pesticides within the City of Oshawa. The intent of the plan is to proactively use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles to improve the health of turf on public lands along with public education in lieu of a by-law.

The plan follows IPM principles and includes: soil testing, fertilizing, aerating, overseeding, cutting turf at 3" and using various alternative products like corn gluten, soil additives and vinegar. Trials of various products have been conducted on different sports fields to determine their efficiency.

The plan is a proactive approach and includes an extensive public education and outreach program. In 2005, a comprehensive advertising program was approved by City Council. The program included radio and newspaper ads, posters and a brochure which was mailed to every land owner in the City. The website provides details on the PMP and other information,

www.oshawa.ca/mun_res/pest.asp. Newspaper articles will be run in 2006. In 2005, the PMP budget was \$450,800.

3. What kind of team do you work with?

Our team includes William Slute, Parks Manager; Leo Stafford, Supervisor Grounds Maintenance; two full-time skilled labourers; and myself. During the summer, the skilled labourers are dedicated to the PMP and in the winter are re-assigned to the forestry crew for juvenile tree maintenance. Indirectly, there are four full-time operators cutting parks and the staff that manage the off-site facilities.

4. What are you and your team responsible for?

We manage the PMP turf maintenance program for 124 parks covering about 2,100 acres. Included are 46 soccer fields and 72 ball diamonds.

5. What is the biggest challenge in your job?

Balancing user group expectations with the maintenance of the sports fields. The PMP has greatly increased the amount of maintenance the fields receive and the amount of time the fields need to be closed. Time is critical for the expected results to be achieved.

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

Our plan is working! The Guelph Turfgrass Institute report prepared for the City of Oshawa indicated the soil and turf in most of our sports fields was in poor condition. A maintenance plan was cre-

ated and implemented. In fact, some parks have shown a 100% improvement. Monthly photos taken of the sports fields shows the results that our hard work has accomplished.



7. What is the biggest misconception about your job?

This position can be perceived as straightforward and simple. However, since it is such a new position, even in Canada, it requires a great deal of work. Consideration of what, where and when products will be used, rates, tests to be done, trials, equipment, user group demands, weather, timing and other aspects.

8. What is your educational/employment background?

I have a B.Sc. in Plant Biology from the University of Guelph and an Environmental Technology Diploma from Fanshawe College.

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

I enjoy being outdoors, so my summer hobbies include hiking, canoeing, fly fishing and identifying plants and birds. When the weather turns colder I quilt, knit and do other crafty projects to keep my hands busy.

10. What direction(s) would you like to see the industry, as a whole, move towards?

I think the industry should concentrate more on Pest Management Programs, which incorporate both Plant Health Care and Integrated Pest Management, instead of passing pesticide by-laws. Education about pests, alternatives and pesticides is extremely important. Public education is the key and can in itself reduce the amount of chemicals being applied to gardens and lawns. We still want to maintain a healthy and aesthetically attractive community. Unless we as a municipality take the lead by showing and educating the public that a PMP works and that pesticide use can be reduced and eliminated, implementing a by-law will not be successful. To view the website that the City of Oshawa has created for our PMP, please visit www.oshawa.ca/mun_res/pest.asp.

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

The networking is a great asset as this position is so new. The knowledge that is available through all the members is a resource that has made my job easier.

FACILITY PROFILE...

1. Name, location of facility.

The City of Oshawa has 118 athletic fields including 4 sport complexes. These include Lakeview Park, Lakefront West, Civic Auditorium and Alexandra Park.

2. General facility information.

Lakeview Park (8 diamonds lit and irrigated), Lakefront West (5 fields, 3 diamonds), Civic Auditorium (4 fields)



and Alexandra Park (1 field, 4 diamonds). Additional fields within other park areas.

3. What types of sports fields are on site?

Soccer, baseball, football and rugby. Ultimate frisbee and lacrosse are also played on some of these sites.

4. How many employees are involved with turf care?

To maintain the 4 sites there is 1 full time staff person and 19 seasonal staff.

5. How many acres of turf are maintained? How many acres of sports turf?

The staff maintains 178 acres which include 63 acres of sports turf.

6. What percentage of this acreage is irrigated?

Eighty percent of the facilities' sports turf is irrigated.

7. What is the primary type of turfgrass? Name of varieties.

The majority of the turf is Kentucky blue grass, however, our overseeding program consists of a mixture of perennial rye and fescue grasses.

8. Is yearly overseeding part of your sports turf maintenance program?

The City has had an overseeding program for many years. After the Guelph Turfgrass Institute (GTI) report was completed, a heavy overseeding program was started in the fall of 2004. Late play prevents overseeding at all locations.

9. How many times do you fertilize?

We granular fertilize at least three times a year if scheduling and weather permits. Liquid fertilizer and other product trials have been applied a few times this year. >>>>



Lakeview West in July – not a pretty site! Dramatic improvements were seen by October.