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It's A Wonderful Life – The Renovation of Toronto's St. James Park

By Jim Novak

In the closing minutes of Frank Capra's holiday film classic, "It's a Wonderful Life" members of a small town come together to help a friend in need and help their community.

A similar story played out last month in Toronto's St. James Park as hundreds of volunteers from all segments of the green industry responded to a call for help to restore the park to its former glory following the damage caused by Occupy Toronto protesters who occupied the park for nearly 40 days.



The once beautiful St. James Park appears to be a mud covered field following the departure of Occupy Toronto protesters. St. James Cathedral is visible in the background.

The park, once the pride of the community had become a heart-breaking eyesore. Former grassy knolls and beautiful green areas looked more like a desolate prairie that had been ravaged by a stampede of buffalo. One observer commented, "They turned the once beautiful park into a mud-covered field".

"They turned the once beautiful park into a mud-covered field."

One city official reached out to the community for contributions and estimated renovation would take a great deal of time and it would cost in excess of \$60,000 to repair the damage that had been done.

The plea for support didn't fall on deaf ears thanks to the efforts of Landscape Ontario and the Nursery Sod Growers Association of Ontario. It all began with one email reaching out to members of the two organizations. The response even stunned the organizers.

At the very start of the renovation, Tony DiGiovanni, executive director of Landscape Ontario was quoted as saying, "There will be more than 10,000 rolls of sod and at least 23 dump trucks of soil and an incredible number of people being very charitable."

The transformation from an unsightly muddy mess to a beautiful park in just a few days couldn't have been done more professionally. The entire area was aerated. New topsoil was spread across 13,000 square yards (11,000 square meters). Nine tractor-trailer loads of freshly cut turfgrass sod from numerous turfgrass farms was harvested, delivered and installed over an area that exceeded 3 acres. Trees and shrubs were trimmed and new mulch was placed around hedge rows and shrubs. It was reported that more than 50 companies donated their time, energy, products and/or services to the project.

It's A Wonderful Life – Cont'd from page 1

Although the media coverage was quick to credit the Nursery Sod Growers Association of Ontario for the sod donation, Brad Vanderwoude, NSGA Board Vice President acknowledged the goodwill of the members who donated sod in an effort to deliver the message of the importance of green space in city centers. Vanderwoude expressed a personal thank you to the following companies* who donated sod and labor to the cause.

Brad Vanderwoude Sod Farms Ltd. (Brad Vanderwoude)

Brayford Sod Farms, Inc. (Fred Brayford)

Brouwer Sod Farms, Ltd. (Gerry Brouwer)

Compact Sod (Green Horizon Group of Farms) (Ron Schiedel)

Fairgreen Sod Farms Ltd. (Cam Fairty)

Queensville Sod Farms (Mark Fairty)

Zander Sod Farms Ltd (Claus Zander)

* It should be noted that all the turfgrass producers who participated were members of *Turfgrass Producers International*.

Mary Battaglia, Parks Manager for the Toronto & East York District offered a few comments of her own in a letter of thanks to all the companies, organizations and volunteers who helped in the effort.

"I am not sure I can adequately put into words the extent of appreciation for your members who were responsible for transforming St. James Park from a muddy, trampled mess to a professionally finished, picture-perfect park. I never imagined that such a huge transformation could be undertaken in such a remarkably short time frame. The professionalism, determination and willingness of the number of companies and their staff that came out to support this initiative was nothing short of awe-inspiring. I truly felt privileged to be a part of this effort as did our entire Staff Team. The contribution made was not only to physically and aesthetically restoring the Park, but most importantly to helping to turn the entire city's attention to the generosity of giving back. What had been an ugly reminder of the damage done is once again a gem."

- Mary Battaglia



Aeration



Top soil



Mulch



Turfgrass sod

Following aeration and the spreading of over 13,000 square yards of new topsoil, volunteers begin laying over 3 acres of freshly cut turfgrass sod. The donated sod and top soil alone were reported to have a combined value in excess of \$40,000.

Cont'd on page 3

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Alan White of Project Evergreen (Canada) who served as a support coordinator wrote, "It was incredible after being on the receiving end of so much bad press over the years, in the end I was told we had made over 22 million positive impressions with a street value of well over \$1 million. Not bad for a couple days planning, a few more to execute it with over 200 volunteers (thanks Landscape Ontario), more than 13,000 rolls of sod (thanks Nursery Sod Growers Association of Ontario), 350 yards of mulch (thanks to Scotts and EarthCo), a few guys hanging around in a few trees (thanks to Davey) and a whole bunch of coffee (thanks Tim Horton's and TD Bank)".

Gerry Brouwer of Brouwer Sod Farms was quick to comment, "Landscape Ontario made a quick decision to gather the troops of landscapers and suppliers together to rescape and clean up St. James Park, free of charge to the City of Toronto. It was one of the best organized volunteer projects I have ever seen and it was all done in 2 days; trees, topsoil, flower beds, mulch, sod, etc. No other project of this nature has ever received this kind of exposure in the media. The Nursery Sod Growers of Ontario received over one million dollars worth of media advertising out of this. This was like selling our sod that we all supplied for \$80.00 per sq. yard. It was quite something to experience, and it serves as an example of what other organizations and associations around the world can do to serve their communities, promote our industry and bring a fresh face to turfgrass as a desirable commodity. When you consider the value of the media coverage we received, the goodwill we created throughout the community, the city of Toronto and throughout Canada . . . it was just overwhelming."



Among those donating sod and volunteering their support, Mark Fairty, of Queensville Sod, and Tom Brayford of Brayford Sod Farms



Cont'd on page 4

It's A Wonderful Life – Cont'd from page 4

Following is a partial list of the many companies who participated in the St. James Park renovation project. It does not reflect all the individuals and/or companies who may have provided additional labor, services or food.

B.P. Landscaping & Snow Removal
 Blaenne Capital
 Boots Landscaping and Maintenance
 Brad Vanderwoude Sod Farms Ltd.
 Brayford Sod Farms Inc
 Breakfast Television - City TV
 Bright Lawn and Gardens
 Brouwer Sod Farms Ltd
 Bruce Wilson Landscaping Ltd
 Camaraderie Coworking Inc
 Cedar Springs Landscape Group
 City of Toronto
 Compact Sod / Greenhorizons Sod Farms
 Compost Council of Canada
 Connon Nurseries NVK Holdings
 Davey Tree Canada
 DeVries Landscaping & Maintenance Inc

Dr Green
 Earthco Soil Mixtures (G&L Group)
 Ecoman
 Fairgreen Sod Farms Ltd
 Fern Ridge Ldscpg
 Frechette Lawn Care
 GreenLawn Ltd
 Grounds Guys Landscape Management Inc
 Hermanns Contracting Ltd
 Humber Valley Landscaping Inc
 Husky Landscaping Services Inc
 Juergen Partridge Ltd.
 Landscape Ontario
 LawnSavers Plant Health Care
 Lees Landscaping
 Miller Compost - The Miller Group
 Mulligan Marketing

Nutri-Lawn Burlington
 Nutri-Lawn Etobicoke
 Oakridge Landscape Contractors Ltd
 Oriole Landscaping Ltd
 Pine Valley Enterprises Inc
 Queensville Sod Farms
 Scotts Canada Ltd.
 Silver Stone Landscaping Ltd
 St. Lawrence Market BIA
 TD Bank
 Tim Hortons
 Turf Management Systems Inc/Truly Nolen
 Turf Systems Inc
 Urban Garden Supply Co Ltd
 Zander Sod Co Ltd

The extensive media coverage resulted in overwhelming public awareness. There was an overflow of positive response featured in newspapers, in television and radio reports, over the social media, and letters of appreciation to both Landscape Ontario and the Nursery Sod Growers Association of Ontario.

"Just wanted to thank all the volunteers who put the park back together. Fantastic job! Many thanks to all those involved."

Bob and Gail Alebon

"So wonderful that your volunteers are working hard in this chilly weather to re-sod St. James Park. Thank you for your generosity. Your example is an inspiration."

*Thank you so much,
 Liz MacLeod*

"Thank you so much for your contribution of product, expertise and effort. This is a wonderful example of commitment and community contribution. I see it as taking the dialogue above and beyond the issues and just practically taking action to return a part of the city to the beautiful place that many of us have enjoyed. What a great endorsement of your professionalism. Bravo! Again, thank you to all those who helped with this work!"

Scot Forsyth



Many of the volunteers gather to receive a heartfelt thank you for their time and commitment to giving back to the community.

It's A Wonderful Life – Cont'd from page 3

The total transformation of St. James Park took place in only a matter of days. (See link to time-lapse video below).

TPI's Past President, **Claus Zander** of Zander Sod who donated sod in response to the cause said, "It was quite an experience. We delivered some sod in the morning with the intent of staying just a brief time and we ended up staying the entire day. When the need for more sod was realized, we sent our trucks back to the farm and harvested more. It was great to see the industry pulling together to promote green space and the benefits of natural turfgrass."

Canadian broadcaster and columnist Mark Cullen may have said it best, "The greater good of the community was served by a small number of people who represent the 140,000 people who make a living in the landscape industry in Canada. This occurred as the result of an idea that was motivated selflessly and motivated only by an opportunity to give back. Like the generosity of a few people sweating together in St. James Park, we are beneficiaries of an industry that is not all about profit or reaping benefits for personal gain. For many, the currency of giving is more valuable than anything else."

At the close of "It's a Wonderful Life" a child turns to her father and says, "Teacher says, every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings." Her father responds, "That's right. That's right."

We would like to think that every time the bells of nearby St. James Cathedral ring out, the more than 200 "volunteer angels" who were so generous in giving back to the community will be reminded that they too - - earned their wings.



Ian True of Trebro Manufacturing was among the many volunteers contributing their support to the renovation effort.



(Left to right) TPI Members **Cam Fairty**, Fairgreen Sod, **Gerry Brouwer**, Brouwer Sod Farms and **Claus Zander**, Zander Sod Farms.



THANK YOU

TPI would like to thank Ian True of Trebro Manufacturing for bringing this story to our attention and to the following individuals who provided photos of the event: Ian True, Jason Esdon, Gerry Brouwer and Rob Elidge.

CLICK HERE for time-lapse video http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=07qe5qsMDbk

TPI Midwinter Conference

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Jan 30—Feb 3, 2012

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For more information go to:

<http://www.turfgrassod.org/publisher/events/2011/8/30/tpi-midwinter-conference>

Thank You



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BOOTH #13

Agrium Advanced Technologies is the leading manufacturer and marketer of controlled release fertilizers and micronutrients in the agricultural, professional turf grass, horticulture, and consumer lawn and garden markets.

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Thank You



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BOOTH #18

Progressive Turf has been a leader in the industry for over 30 years producing specialized grass cutting equipment for golf courses, sod producers, sports turf maintenance, professional landscapers and municipalities.

Be sure to visit their exhibit booth while you're at the Midwinter Conference.



Duane Klundt named Vice President of North American Turfgrass Sales at Grassland Oregon



Grassland Oregon, a leading provider of top rated cool season grass varieties/species, has announced the appointment of **Duane Klundt** as their Vice President of Turf Grass Sales for North America.

"Duane comes to Grassland Oregon from The Scott's Company, where he was a Senior Territory Manager for their Professional Turf Sales for North America. With a long history of exemplary service to the industry, reputation of superior turf knowledge, and management skills we are fortunate to have Duane join our team and oversee Grassland Oregon's growth in this market sector", says Jerry Hall, General Manager and Partner.

In addition to serving as **Secretary-Treasurer of Turfgrass Producers International**, and Vice President of the Oregon Seed Trade Association Board of Directors, Duane's previous service to the industry has included Past Chairman of the American Seed Trade Association Lawn Seed Division, Past President of the Pacific Seed Trade Association, Past Chairman of NTEP (National Turf Evaluation Program) and prior to his appointment as TPI's Secretary-Treasurer he served on the TPI Board of Trustees.

Duane can be reached at:
Phone: 503-566-9900
Fax: 503-566-9901
Email: DuaneKlundt@GrasslandOregon.com



Dr. Wayne Hanna to be honored with 2012 USGA Green Section



The United States Golf Association has selected turfgrass scientist Dr. Wayne Hanna, of Chula, Ga., as the recipient of the 2012 USGA Green Section Award for his achievements in developing environmentally friendly grasses that have made a tremendous impact on golf courses around the world.

The Green Section Award recognizes individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the game through their work with turfgrass. The USGA Green Section was created in 1920 to conduct research and to collect and distribute information about the proper maintenance and upkeep of golf courses to member clubs and courses.

During his 40-year career, Hanna has produced bermudagrasses such as TifSport, TifEagle and TifGrand, all of which are hardier and less costly to maintain, while providing excellent fairway and putting surfaces for the enjoyment of millions of players, including those competing in USGA championships.

Although he retired two years ago, Hanna is still involved in the University of Georgia's turfgrass research program and will continue to have an impact on future advancements. He built a strong team of scientists that includes protégés such as Dr. Brian Schwartz, who is developing a bermudagrass that can stay green longer without water.

"For the future, water is one of the most precious natural resources we have," said Hanna. "Anything we can do to use less water is a big benefit."

NOTE: Dr. Wayne Hanna was also the recipient of the TPI Honorary Award in 2006 for his contribution to turfgrass research and for his lifelong support of the turfgrass industry.

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reaches a new high!

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

**Turfgrass scientists
take to the sky
to study what's on
the ground.**



A robotic helicopter provides aerial images of fields that help scientists conduct crops research.

Scientists at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are using robotic helicopters to conduct aerial crop research.

Assistant turfgrass and genetics professor Keenan Amundsen says the new technology saves time and makes research easier. He says aerial crop scouting was once costly and inefficient, but it has become easier with new technology. The helicopter used is roughly the size of a large pizza. Researchers use the helicopters to examine how turf performs under different amounts of irrigation, by capturing all images in one clean shot.



“PURPLE GOLD – A contemporary view of recycled water irrigation” appeared in the December 2011 issue of the USGA Green Section Record (on-line). The article is not “Golf course specific” and should be of interest to anyone who is irrigating turfgrasses and is concerned about the water issues. In light of droughts and concerns about water consumption of turfgrasses nationally and internationally, I think this article should be of interest to your respective readers and useful in educating their clients. – Dr. Ali Harivandi

Excerpt from:
PURPLE GOLD – A contemporary view
of recycled water irrigation.

By Dr. M. Ali Harivandi

WATER DISTRIBUTION

Although three-quarters of the earth’s surface is covered with water, only a minute fraction of all the water on earth is both readily available and of sufficient quality to be suitable for human use, including irrigation of agricultural crops and landscape plants. In fact, it is estimated that only 0.02% of all water on earth is fresh and immediately available — i.e., could be used with relative ease and with minimal energy input and expense. That small fraction of earth’s water includes rain and snow-melt stored in lakes and reservoirs, as well as water available in rivers.

More than 99% of earth’s water is in its oceans or locked in polar ice caps and glaciers. Converting water from these sources to potable form is highly energy-dependent and expensive. Yet fresh surface and ground water together are being rapidly depleted due to industrial and agricultural use and direct human consumption. Population growth accelerates and exacerbates the potable water scarcity. Also, human activities continue to pollute much of earth’s waters, contributing to potable water scarcity. It is estimated that by the year 2025, earth’s population will pass 8 billion, with the great majority of the population living in large metropolitan areas. Most of the world’s turfgrass (and other landscape plantings) is also in urban centers, where it competes with human consumption and food production for access to high-quality irrigation water.

Another piece of the world’s water puzzle, drought is a serious and increasing problem in much of the world. In the United States and else-where over the past two decades, significant drought conditions occurred in



Advanced sewage treatment takes raw sewage and converts it into clear, reclaimed water that looks as good to the human eye as any potable water. However, many “dissolved” solids (salts) still remain and are of concern if the water is to be used for irrigation.

various regions. During the same period, Americans migrated in large numbers to “desert” states. Housing developments in these arid regions, along with their attendant landscape sites (golf courses especially) have significantly increased the demand for water. In most cases, turf and landscape irrigation is not a priority for municipalities during droughts. Severe restrictions on turfgrass and landscape irrigation during droughts are common, including complete shutdown of golf course or park irrigation. Irrigation with recycled water is therefore a viable means of coping with drought, water shortages, and/or the rising cost of potable water.

Currently, large volumes of recycled water are used to irrigate golf courses, parks, roadsides, landscapes, cemeteries, athletic fields, sod production farms, and other landscape sites. Interest in recycled water irrigation also increases as more and better-quality treated sewage water becomes available.

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Advanced wastewater treatment involves processes and equipment similar to those used for potable water treatment. Advanced treatment is often referred to as "tertiary treatment."

Sewage treatment has become more effective at eliminating potential human pathogens. Historically, treated sewage water was used to irrigate crops not consumed directly by humans (e.g., pasture, fodder, fiber, and seed crops), fruits borne high enough on trees that they did not come into contact with irrigation water, and crops grown for processing (e.g. grapes for wine, tomatoes for ketchup, or cucumbers for pickling). Today, most sewage treatment plants produce high-quality recycled water suitable (as far as human-pathogen content is concerned) for additional uses such as golf courses, parks, athletic fields, and other urban landscape sites. In certain southwest desert areas of the United States, most golf courses (and associated landscapes) may use only recycled (or other degraded-quality) water for irrigation. In a larger context, recycled water is now the irrigation source for approximately 15% of U.S. golf courses and close to 35% of courses in southwestern states. These figures are rapidly increasing, as are those for all other commercial, institutional, and industrial sites irrigated with recycled water.

To read Dr. Harivandi's article in its entirety including his opening remarks, how water is recycled, potential challenges, potential solutions and his concluding remarks.

[CLICK HERE:](#)

www.turfgrassod.org/files/file/6c91a99f-ed06-4c51-9abc-66ad59eac998

TPI would like to express its appreciation to Dr. Harivandi and Kimberly S. Erusha, Ph.D, Managing Director, Green Section United States Golf Association for permission to reprint portions of this article and for making the full article available to our readers on the TPI website.

Congratulations to Dr. Tony Koski recipient of Colorado State University's distinguished F.A. Anderson Award



Dr. Tony Koski, turfgrass specialist and professor in the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture at Colorado State University received the F.A. Anderson Award, which recognizes an Extension professional for outstanding performance throughout their Extension career.

CSU's Extension Director Lou Swanson stated, "Koski's quality programming has included classroom and field instruction for agents, staff and volunteers on an array of turf topics. His guided diagnostic sessions and training materials have contributed to a better understanding of appropriate turf varieties, watering practices and fertilization requirements."

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TPI represented?
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An on-going series featuring photos and copy
from TPI member websites.

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Slocum, Rhode Island USA

<http://www.sodco.net/>



Located in Slocum, Rhode Island, Sodco was started in 1981. Situated on 500 acres of some of the finest farm land in New England, Sodco has grown into one of the largest sod producers in the area.



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Sodco is a proud member of
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TurfSide-UP

A Whale of a Tale?



**Please raise your hands if you have tried to
fertilize your field with whale manure!**

Australian scientists are collecting whale waste as part of a study to determine if it could help "fertilize" the ocean and make it more productive.

Scientists from the Australian Antarctic Division, based in Hobart, have been testing the hypothesis that enormous amounts of iron excreted by whales is similar to liquid manure. This fertilizer helps phytoplankton grow, which in turn helps support a wide number of marine species.

Whales take the iron into their systems by eating massive quantities of krill, a shrimp-like crustacean. But because whales produce blubber rather than muscle, they don't need iron in their diet - so it passes out in their excrement.

- Source: The AGE.com.au 1/5/12

**Who knows, someday there might be other
uses for whale fertilizer. Of course, the size
of the bags might be an issue.**