

STORYLINE

Volunteers help revitalize St. James Park for the spring season

[VOICEOVER] To celebrate Earth Day, volunteers from Ontario's green industry gathered on the early morning of April 21 to clean, maintain, and reseed downtown Toronto's St. James park.

[VOICEOVER] The revitalization initiative was the combined effort of 150 volunteers from the Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trade Association, the non-profit Nursery Sod Growers Association of Ontario, and Project Evergreen.

[VOICEOVER] Late Last year, St. James Park became the campsite for occupy Toronto protesters for 39 days. After the protesters were removed, city officials estimated the repair cost for the muddy and malnourished park lawns to be between \$20,000 to \$60,000.

[VOICEOVER] Last December, green industry companies donated 11,000 square metres of new sods to the park. With the help of volunteers, the revitalization of the park became a success at no cost to the city.

[STANDUP] This year, volunteers return to St. James Park on Saturday morning to fertilize the new sod for the spring season. Both volunteers and green industry professionals are here to ensure the park stays green and clean.

[SOUNDBITE] 02:36 – 03:00 KYLE TOBIN, PRESIDENT, LAWNSAVERS, EVENT PROJECT LEADER

“Today we have 150 company members contribute last December into doing this effort, a lot of them have sent out people this year, as well in the spring to continue this effort and at the same time what we are really trying to do is get the community involved so they now will take this, and it's a handover to them to support and taking care of it in the long run.”

[VOICEOVER] Many green industry professionals agree that proper lawn care maintenance can reap lasting benefits for the environment.

[SOUNDBITE] 06:37 – 07:05 STEVE, TFCHANZ, GREEN INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL, WEEDMAN

“Having green spaces is very important for the community, it's healthy for children, it's healthy for just the whole environment. Turf does so many positive things for our environment that gets overlooked because we step on it everyday. It's actually a living breathing, organism that produces oxygen for the most part while you see green longer than trees do during the year because it green longer.”

[VOICEOVER] To many local residents, St. James Park is an essential green space in Toronto's downtown core.

[SOUNDBITE] 05:46 -05:56 JULIE BUCKAREFF, LOCAL RESIDENT, ST. LAWRENCE BIA MEMBER, VOLUNTEER

“It’s important to keep the green space cause I think in an urban city, so many parks are getting cemented over and it’s important to have the green space available for the kids.”

[SOUNDBITE] 05:16 – 05:25, INGE ZELDENRUST, LOCAL RESIDENT, VOLUNTEER

“To be able to play here and enjoy it, it should be clean and healthy and I think it’s something we need to do for all the green spaces in our city. I think it’s a really important thing.”

[VOICEOVER] The fertilization of the park lawns comes as a precursor to Earth Day, which falls on April 22. Volunteers hope that with the park cleaned up, and the lawns healthy, the local community can come to appreciate the role it plays in the neighbourhood.

[SOUNDBITE] 01:00 – 01:33 KYLE TOBIN, PRESIDENT, LAWNSAVERS, EVENT PROJECT LEADER

“It’s one thing just to have people come in and do a really massive clean up effort, but most important thing is that people maintain it and understand what they have here. What they have here is more than 150,000 square feet of turf and turf is a living, breathing organism, it’s a plant that requires care, and so people understand trees but what they don’t understand is the value of turf to the environment and this turf here in this particular park can actually support the need of about 5,000 people in terms of oxygen.”