

## HAZEL LANES 2020 / 2021 LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE REPORT

Firstly, I like to thank Beth Girvan, my fellow committee member. She has been most generous with her time, offering sage advice and plant knowledge.

I also want to acknowledge the work and customer service we received from TLC; they continue to use our complex as an example of their maintenance quality and innovative activities. Hazel Lanes in 2021 was their first client to use three robotic mowers to cut the grass in major backyard areas. These mowers have generally been well received by residents and certainly sparked a lot of interest. I want to thank Lois Leatham / Bala Balakrishnan and John Creery for hosting the mower docking stations needed for Robbie the Robot (south lawns), a.k.a. George and Mario (Andretti) (Hazel Avenue mower). The mower in the north end docks at unit 51 and is known as Creeping Charlie.

Maintenance of the landscape and snow removal (\$194,761) represents about 60% of the budget for Hazel Lanes. Of that amount, 80% or \$158,261 is covered by the basic landscape and snow removal contract; the balance (\$36,500) is for elective landscape improvements / maintenance, such as removing diseased trees and replacing them with new trees, and for snow extras, such as moving snow piles. Of this \$36,500, half is for complex wide needs such as dandelion pulling, dormant oil application, tree pruning, snow fencing, etc.; that leaves about \$260 per unit for landscaping the front of 69 units.

I am grateful to John Bisset and Phil Nagle as they manage irrigation and snow removal issues. John Bisset oversees Scott MacKenzie Irrigation on irrigation issues. Phil Nagle at Huntington Properties oversees snow removal and major drainage issues. Irrigation expense of \$12,000 is a separate budget line item and major drainage repairs are now treated as a reserve fund item.

Hazel Lanes is a huge complex with a total of 6.7 hectares or 16.4 acres. In terms of grass area, it is probably 3.42 hectares or 8.45 acres of grass, i.e. 51.5% grass, net of houses and roads. Overall, the gross area of Hazel Lanes exceeds 8 Canadian football fields.

2021 was a year of shortages in good quality plant material. As a result, a number of projects were deferred to 2022. As well, 2021 saw much higher plant pricing as a result of scarce plant material and a shortage of labour to complete landscapes. Tree pruning / removal rates have virtually doubled in the last three years, probably for insurance and liability issues.

Each year we encounter new diseases in trees and shrubs. As a result, we have

- removed all but one of our Austrian Pines (Diplodia tip blight) and all of our Purpleleaf Sandcherry (peach tree borer)
- pruned or removed about 10 Norway Maples which suffered major branch dieback in 2019. Fortunately, this dieback was minor in the spring of 2020 and 2021, although one can still see remnants of the dieback in the crowns of some trees)
- replaced 14 diseased Colorado and Norway spruce at the top of the complex (along Riverside Drive) with Canadian Hemlock (Cytospora canker) – further work was put on hold in 2021 for budgetary and hemlock supply issues

A new fungus (*Bretziella fagacearum*), the pathogen for oak wilt, is becoming a concern as it is fatal to red oak. The fungus is found in Michigan. The fungus enters the tree through pruning wounds (one of the reasons, Hazel Lanes does not do cosmetic tree pruning).

The cedar hedges along Hazel Avenue were protected again this winter by green snow fencing on all sides of the plants in the hopes that keeping the deer away will allow the lower foliage to fill in the hedge (cost \$2,500 per year). We also pruned and fertilizing these plants to promote growth of foliage on the lower branches and filled in some holes with smaller plants.

Maintaining the grass has become more and more difficult as we no longer have access to the pesticides needed to control crab grass, creeping Charlie, clover and other undesirable lawn weeds. We try to control weeds with Fiesta, one of the few pesticides available for selected weed control. Our best tools, however, are irrigation, fertilization, aeration, dense grass cover and slit seeding to encourage the grass to “outgrow” the weeds. One additional challenge has been that topsoil cannot be treated for weed seeds (except if it is subject to high heat treatment).

Disease prone plants in the complex (such as broadleaf winter creeper, also known as evergreen euonymus) are being replaced with other plants as a budget permits. Where feasible we remove undesirable plants, such as European buckthorn. The Landscape Committee also continues to rejuvenate some of the older plants (junipers, lilacs, etc.) which are getting to be too large. Over time, the Landscape Committee will remove plants that are prone to becoming unsightly because of their attractiveness to destructive insects (such as Japanese beetle)

For the last two years, we used Wilt Pruf to protect sensitive plants from salt and cold damage. The trial was generally successful; we will be using this anti desiccant more extensively next winter, particularly on boxwood, hemlock and other evergreens in exposed areas.

The gardens at the Riverside Drive and Hazel Avenue entrances, the rose garden near the Riverside drive entrance and a number of perennial gardens are maintained by Hazel Lanes. As we rejuvenate areas and add gardens, we are striving to add both colour and flowering effects throughout the complex (such as the Bradford Pear on the berm behind units 15, 17 and 19). We planted forsythia on the east side of the Riverside entrance to screen the London Hydro transformer and we planted Double Kerria as a screen for the golf course washroom.

I also want to acknowledge the wonderful gardens that a number of residents have added to their back yards. In many cases, these gardens can also be enjoyed by neighbours. In 2018, well before COVID, your Landscape Committee arranged walk arounds in some backyards to showcase what others have done and to provide a forum for asking questions of local landscape experts. We hope to have a third walk around next year.

TLC, our landscape contractor, in recognition of our 30 year relationship, rejuvenated the Hazel Avenue entrance at no cost to Hazel Lanes. TLC re-landscaped the Riverside Drive entrance a few years ago.

Landscaping got off to a slow start this spring as a result of COVID-19 protocols – our irrigation and landscape contractors were prohibited from working for a number of weeks. It took a while to get caught up, but we are back to quasi-normal now.

The hot and dry weather conditions in the summer have impacted our trees, grass and other plants. Fortunately, our irrigation system has moderated the impact, but nonetheless we have experienced unusual leaf drop as trees struggle to cope with heat and dry conditions. Unless we have a repeat of these conditions next year, the landscape should bounce back next spring / summer.

Over the past 12 years, the Landscape Committee has surveyed residents as to their satisfaction with landscaping, irrigation and snow removal. The results continue to be most gratifying with a 70% response rate with the satisfaction rates listed below:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Landscape	64%	68%	64%	71%	70%	72%	76%	76%	77%	75%	75%	75%
Irrigation	64%	61%	64%	61%	61%	61%	69%	74%	65%	68%	65%	61%
Snow	60%	72%	66%	73%	67%	72%	73%	75%	70%	76%	75%	81%

The landscape scores would have been higher if the weed control question had been omitted (the city and then the province banned pesticide use in 2008 making weed and insect control difficult in turf). The Committee thanks you for your input and will survey residents again next year; this is the best way to get an overall sense of resident's satisfaction and helps in discussing issues with our contractors.

We have a number of new residents, so let me mention that Hazel Lanes takes care of the grass, most trees, the woody ornamental plantings at the front of each unit, the plantings on the side of highly visible units and the common areas (the pool area and the berm along Riverside Drive primarily). Residents are at liberty to plant perennials and annuals in existing gardens as they wish; vegetables and fruit trees are only permitted in pots. If you intend to create or expand a garden, plant a tree, vine or shrub, contact me before proceeding as permission to plant is required.

I might mention for new residents the difference between landscape maintenance and gardening. Our contractor, Tender Lawn Care (TLC), takes care of landscaping (and the landscape survey shows that they do a good job). Their contract does not include being your gardener. For example, each of us might take several hours to weed and prune the plants in our gardens; TLC cannot realistically take the time to do that for all 69 homes and the common areas. So, especially for newer residents, I want to set your expectations realistically. In some cases, residents employ a private gardener to handle private gardens in the rear of their units.

Hazel Lanes prunes Japanese maple trees and cedar hedges in alternate years. We root feed all major trees and the Hazel Avenue hedge every year. We also dethatch, slit seed and aerate the turf every year, as well as fertilizing four times a year, all with a goal of choking out weeds. We use one of the only permitted "herbicide" to control some lawn weeds. Again, this year, we dug up all visible dandelions, an activity that reduced our dandelion population dramatically (and was highly popular in the last four years). Each year we prune major trees to remove diseased and dead major branches and to prune trees away from the roofs; we do not prune trees for cosmetic reasons as any pruning opens up a vector for disease and insects. From time to time, I am asked to sod or top dress and seed turf areas that are somewhat bare – while I am happy to review any concerns in this area, the grass issues are typically associated with shading from nearby trees or the toxin found in walnut roots.

There is a wealth of information on the Hazel Lanes website <http://www.hazellanes.ca>, everything from plant descriptions to the rules for landscape changes. If you are planning to modify your gardens, please give me a call; changes require approval.

Frank Kearney  
Chair, Hazel Lanes Landscape Committee  
September 15, 2021