



Leading the way to healthy Canadian landscapes



Vineland is on the cusp of an exciting new chapter in its long-standing urban greening work. A value chain-wide consortium is being established to help address common urban landscape challenges and will be accompanied by new infrastructure on the Vineland campus dedicated to greening Canada's landscapes.

Urban greening, the creation of greenspace in urban environments, is a key building block in fighting climate change and ensuring sustainable living in our towns and cities. Unfortunately, tree failure in urban plantings is extremely high, a costly problem for municipalities and the landscape industry.

That's why, for more than a decade, Vineland has been at the forefront of research into how to improve tree survival and increase the sustainability of urban trees and shrubs through its Greening the Landscape program.

"This new initiative is about addressing research gaps that are common across the whole stakeholder spectrum and being able to identify and trial solutions in real world landscapes that will have widespread benefits," says Darby McGrath, Vineland's Senior Research Scientist in Environmental Horticulture. "The economic impacts of failed urban plantings are considerable and a coordinated approach to horticulture research will help increase the competitiveness of the nursery landscape sector in a multitude of ways."



Darby McGrath,
Senior Research Scientist,
Environmental Horticulture

COVID-19 has made this new Vineland venture even more timely. A sudden spotlight has been put on the availability and accessibility of greenspace in urban areas, and it is now a hot topic for cities trying to re-imagine their post-pandemic futures.

Landscape Ontario is a strong supporter of Vineland's new direction in urban horticulture and the new consortium. It's the next evolution of the longstanding relationship between Vineland and Landscape Ontario, a key supporter in the original development and launch of Vineland as a horticultural innovation hub more than a decade ago.

"Landscape Ontario has witnessed small investments reap huge rewards with respect to industry development. Every interaction we have had with the Vineland team has resulted in long-lasting benefit," says Landscape Ontario Executive Director Tony DiGiovanni. "The activities of the new consortium and the projects it will lead at Vineland will bestow benefits for generations to come."

Landscape Ontario is Ontario's leading horticultural trades association and its more than 2,000 members represent a wide range of landscape professionals from designers, grounds managers and growers to garden centres, contractors and lawn care specialists.

"Landscape Ontario is a leader in this industry and their support is a vote of confidence for Vineland and this new initiative following years of partnership and support," says McGrath. "We are a results-driven organization so having the right partners is very important — that's where we will see real change happening at the grass roots level."

Consortium stakeholders will include municipalities, conservation authorities, the provincial government, non-governmental organizations, suppliers, nurseries, landscape professionals, architects, professional associations, developers and consultants. The group of founding consortium members will play a crucial role in determining the first slate of projects that Vineland hopes to launch soon. Long-term, consortium members will help determine research priorities for urban greening work at Vineland to ensure the projects are relevant to the needs of the sector and help support its economic success.

"A coordinated approach to horticulture research holds significant value and this is going to bring everyone in the urban greening or urban forestry value chain together," adds McGrath. "We're looking forward to working with new participants as this initiative unfolds."



Why it matters: dollars that make sense

The typical tree lifespan alongside a major roadside, for example, is only five to 10 years before it dies and must be replaced, resulting in additional costs to both the municipalities and the landscape industry. For the urban greening industry, solving the problems behind tree failure is an important part of its future economic sustainability.