

# Occupational Health and Safety What Do Groundskeepers Need To Know To Keep Safe On the Job?

**By Wendy Langis**  
BY GUEST COLUMNIST

It is now that time of year when lawn care companies and contractors are busy preparing their clients' yards, gardens, and parks for the summer months. Are there things you should be aware of when you are applying pesticides, trimming trees, riding lawn mowers and even shovels? Yes there are. Let's have a look.

Even though it is a warm day Personal Protective Equipment is essential for the work you are about to do. Ensure you are wearing safety footwear, headwear, hearing protection and safety glasses.

Applying pesticides: Ensure you are using the right pesticide for the job you are doing. Do not mix pesticides with your hands. Pesticides can enter the body 3 ways, by mouth, through the skin and eyes. Prior to using compressed sprayers, ensure there are no leaks in the hoses. Periodically check your clothing to ensure nothing has spilled on you or that you do not have any holes. Do not walk backwards while carrying a compressed air sprayer. Wear rubber boots.



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In tree trimming, ensure you have marked off the area around the tree and free from any power lines. Always work with a ground person. Learn to recognize trees weakened by disease or trees prone to cracking. Raise or lower tools by attaching hand lines to the end of tools. Tools attached at the center might catch on branches making it difficult to lower or raise. Do not work in wet or icy weather. Have your ropes properly inspected for fraying; keep ropes coiled while not in use. Personal protective again is very important while tree trimming.

Riding lawn mowers also require personal protective equipment to be worn such as hearing and head protection. Ensure your area is clear from debris which can be thrown by the blades. Ensure prior to starting that the blade is secured tightly, check the catcher bag for wear and tear. Mow up and down slopes rather than sideways for greater stability. When a job is complete inspect the mower for any visual signs of wear and tear.

Even using a shovel requires precaution. Ensure the area you are going to be digging does have cables or pipes. Choose the right shovel: a spade for digging and shovel for shoveling. A garden shovel should also be the right length for the individual using it, ie., a garden shovel should be between elbow and chest height. A safe weight for a shovel and a load should be between 5-7 kg or 10-15 lbs. Most efficient shoveling rate is 15-20 scoops per minutes. This rate should not last longer than 15 minutes.

Do not forget to wear Sunscreen while you are working!

By following these guidelines you should be safe while you are at work and in turn have very happy clients with beautiful yard work that they can be proud of year after year.

**• Wendy Langis is an information technician with the Occupational Health Clinic (Sudbury). If you require information or have an occupational health topic you would like addressed in a future column, contact the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. in Sudbury at 523-2330.**