

Reconnect, Reinvent, Re-Energize: Congress 2015



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MILTON, Ont., Canada – Crowds and suppliers were focused on the future at Congress, held Jan. 6-8 at the Toronto Congress Centre.

Over 12,000 professionals attended the show, which featured 586 exhibitors on 8 acres of floor space. Landscape construction and maintenance are the primary sectors served by Congress, as well as other green industry specialties ranging from retailing to nursery growing to landscape design. According to the mood of attendees, the recent economic downturn is history; delegates were energized and looking to grow their businesses.

Congress is an initiative of Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association, one of the most vibrant associations of its kind in the world. Congress consistently ranks as one of Canada's Top 10 trade shows. Hutcheson Sand and Mixes, Mar-Co Clay and Stone, Techo-Bloc, Battlefield Equipment Rentals and STIHL received Best Booth awards for the 2015 show. Kubota Canada won the Best of Show award for its outstanding display, which included a full-sized loader done up as a cellophane and cardboard-packaged toy. NewRoads National Leasing was honored with the Special Promotion award, for its creativity in promoting show attendance electronically. A high-visibility opportunity offered to exhibitors was display space in the New Product Showcase. The Showcase was always busy with delegates interested in the new product offerings.

Congress is also the Canadian industry's professional development hub, offering over 30 sessions and keynotes through the Congress Conference series. Integrated Pest Management, landscape design, peer mentoring and irrigation were all topics of special conferences. Julie Moir Messervy, Jeffrey Scott, Michael "Pinball" Clemons, Meg Soper, Jim Paluch, Tom Shay and Peter van Stralen are just a few of the high-profile speakers presented at this year's event.

An annual Congress highlight is Landscape Ontario's Awards of Excellence ceremony. Over 600 attended the Jan. 6, 2015, gala, which showcased breathtaking landscape projects. The ceremony featured professional staging and a live band, in talk-show format. The evening's host was Frank Ferragine of Breakfast Television; his sidekick bore an uncanny resemblance to Jay Leno.

The green industry is committed to matching young people with rewarding careers in horticulture. Students from horticulture programs at Durham, Fanshawe, Humber, Niagara and St. Clair colleges and the University of Guelph built (and dismantled) high-style display gardens at Congress.

All delegates were invited to the Wednesday evening Tailgate Party; the ultimate networking dinner event. The hardworking landscape industry looks forward to taking a break at Tailgate each year, and more than 800 attended in 2015.

Thanks are due to Congress sponsors Stone Arch/Global Arch, Banas Stones, International Plaza Hotel, Landscape Trades magazine, the Landscape Ontario Hardscape Committee, Beaver Valley Stone, Best Way Stone, Bobcat, Medallion Fence and Vermeer Canada.

A very important component of the show's leadership is its volunteer committee; these industry members actually pitch in before, during and after the show. When it comes to show operations, Congress has a reputation as exceptionally well organized, efficient and respectful.

Congress 2016 takes place Jan. 12-14, 2016, at the Toronto Congress Centre. Bookmark www.LOCongress.com for up-to-date show information.