

What's new in fairway mowers

MANUFACTURERS ANSWER DEMAND FOR GREENS-QUALITY CUT ON FAIRWAYS

More and more, fairway conditions are getting as much attention as greens. On some courses superintendents are aiming for a greens-quality cut and a striking surface appearance. To help accomplish this, mower manufacturers are introducing specialized fairway mowers or enhancing current products.

Jacobsen 'super lightweight' fairway mower

The Jacobsen Super LF-1880 aims to

deserve its "super lightweight" designation. At approximately 2,000 pounds, it weighs 400 pounds less than comparable two-wheel-drive models and 500 pounds less than four-wheel-drive mowers, reducing turf compaction.

Jacobsen fairway product manager Larry Jones offers some insight into the concept and design philosophy of the Super LF-1880: "Many courses that want the best quality fairway conditions use triplex greens mowers," he says. "These units are also used to mow landing areas that are

becoming larger and more contoured.

One of the challenges with triplexes in this application is that productivity is reduced because of their 62-inch cut, compared to 100 inches on a standard five-gang fairway mower. Also, triplex mowers and conventional five-gang fairway mowers are outfitted with 22-inch-wide cutting units, which occasionally limit their ability to follow fairway undulations under contoured situations."

With an 80-inch cut, the Super LF-1880 increases productivity compared to



Photo: Jacobsen

Jacobsen's Super LF-1880 has been designed for affordability and versatility. Engineered for fairways, the mower also handles green surrounds and long tee boxes.

triplex mowers, and the 18-inch reels perform better on undulating fairways, he says. The result is a better overall quality finish even under challenging conditions. In addition, an 80-inch-wide cut pattern improves visual aesthetics by adding definition.

"Again," Jones says, "compared to present alternatives, the Super LF-1880 has better productivity (80-inch cut vs. 62 inches) and better performance (18-inch, eight- and 11-blade reels compared to 22-inch, seven-blade reels)."

Joe Alonzi, superintendent of Westchester Country Club, Rye, N.Y., uses five Super LF-1880s on the West Course, which hosts the PGA Tour's Buick Classic.

"The tighter striping looks great on television," he says. "The quality of cut is better than a triplex, and with an 80-inch-wide mower, we can put more stripes in a tighter area compared to a 100-inch-wide fairway mower."

Last year's tournament was hampered by heavy rain. Alonzi says the LF-1880s allowed him to mow the fairways despite the weather.

"Water was shooting out of the cuttings and away from the mower like a boat wake," he says. "There were areas I couldn't walk across without leaving a mark, but the LF-1880s went through without leaving a mark."

Productivity is equally critical to Alonzi.

"We have to have great conditions, but with 45 holes, including a 9-hole executive course, I need more efficiency than I would get with triplex mowers," he says. "Most fairway mowers are too heavy to accomplish what we want, while triplexes require too much manpower. On our 36 regular holes, it took four to five people to mow fairways with triplex units, compared to three with a five-gang unit. Like anyplace else, we have to complete fairway mowing before golfers begin play."

At Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Orlando, Fla., quality is paramount, with productivity close behind. The maintenance staff uses three Super LF-1880s.

"This mower is the ideal choice for us," says superintendent John Anderson. "Its 80-inch-wide cut gives us the striping look we want. And because this machine is lighter, we can mow in wet conditions and not damage the course."

Anderson says his staff doesn't sacrifice productivity with the Super LF-1880. Because its five reels have a greater frequency of cut than larger mowers, op-

erators can mow at a faster ground speed.

"We mow our fairways in about the same amount of time as we did with larger units," he says, "but we get much better striping with the LF-1880s."

Quality of cut is not an issue. Anderson adds, "The mower's 18-inch reels give us a much better cut going over undulations, compared to a traditional fairway mower with larger reels. The faster reel speed provides a crisper cut."

Deere command arm provides fingertip control

Superintendents will find increased productivity and operator comfort on John Deere's C-Series lightweight fairway mowers, according to John Deere product manager, Tracy Lanier.

For operator comfort, the command arm on 3225C and 3235C mowers puts the key switch, mow switch, throttle lever and raise/lower lever conveniently at the operator's fingertips. The patented "white box" controller is easily viewed from the operator's seat. The controller also offers quick, on-board electrical diagnosis for less operator downtime.

Additionally, a new hood constructed of strong, flexible composite material improves the appearance, sound level and durability of both machines.

Other improvements include:

- The 3225C is equipped with a three-cylinder, 38.5-hp, liquid-cooled diesel engine. It comes with a standard 22-inch, seven-blade cutting unit, or it can be specified with a 22-inch, five- or eight-blade Extra Strength Precision (ESP) units.

- The 3235C is equipped with a three-cylinder, 48.5-hp, liquid-cooled turbo-charged diesel engine. It can use the seven-blade, 22-inch standard or five-, eight- or 10-blade, 22-inch ESP cutting units.

- A large-capacity oil cooler is standard on all C-Series models. This feature is ideal for heavy-duty mowing conditions with high ambient temperatures, or when operating under heavy loads, such as verticutting or scalping for overseeding.

- Maximum mowing speed for both models is seven mph with a transport speed of 11 mph.

- Both models have an 18-gallon fuel capacity for all-day operation.



Increased productivity and operator comfort are the leading enhancements to John Deere's C-Series lightweight mowers.

- Mowing width of the new 3225C and 3235C is a productive 100 inches.

- An increased number of hard lines in the hydraulic system reduce the possibility of leaks.

- The cutting units on C-Series mowers are lifted and lowered by a single-lever joystick.

- Both units come with standard 50-watt Halogen headlights and tilt steering.

- Both models are available with optional cruise control and 4-wheel drive.

"We are committed to being on the leading edge of technology," says Lanier. "More demands are being placed on superintendents, and they want the latest features so their courses can look their best and their staff can be productive."

The Atlanta Athletic Club, Duluth, Ga., has been using the 3235B fairway mower for several years. The Highland Course hosted the 2001 PGA Championship. Superintendent Ken Mangum says several individuals have input on equipment purchases.

"The people who drive the mowers and work on them every day have a significant impact on what we buy," he explains. "Price is important, unless it is outweighed by a mower that isn't comfortable for operators to use, or easy for technicians to work on. Finally, a manufacturer can have a great piece of equipment, but if we can't get parts in a timely manner, we won't buy that mower."

Mangum says his John Deere fairway



Toro offers turf groomers on its 7-inch diameter fairway cutting units (top unit). Toro's optional powered rear roller brushes (lower) minimize unsightly grass clippings on fairways.

Photo:Toro

mowers deliver a quality cut, are dependable and easy to service.

"The number of years we have been using these mowers speaks to our satisfaction with them," he says. "We have to have backup for our equipment. The parts availability and service support we get from our dealer are superior to anything else we've experienced."

Turf groomers are an option on Toro fairway mowers

Turf groomers are generally recognized as a device to increase green speed without lowering the height of cut. An additional benefit groomers provide on all surfaces is healthier turf. Toro now is offering turf groomers on its seven-inch diameter fairway cutting units.

Prior to turf groomers, many superintendents used verticutters to reduce thatch buildup and cut horizontal runners choking turf. Unfortunately, verticutting knives slice deeply into the turf, taking up to 30 days to completely heal.

On the other hand, a turf groomer's powered vertical knives rotate through closely spaced roller slots to remove thatch and cut horizontal runners, exposing the growth zone to more air, light, water and nutrients. The action of the turf groomer promotes a healthier, deeper root system and helps smooth out irregularities in the turf. The depth the knives penetrate the turf is fully adjustable to prevent turf damage while providing light aeration to the soil. The turf groomer's short roller base closely follows ground contours to deliver maximum results.

Toro's optional turf groomer:

- Attaches to all 03860, 03861 and 03862 cutting units used on Reelmaster 5500, 6500 and 6700 fairway mowers.
- Features tool-less engagement into

the grass and the raised position.

- Are adjustable to 3/16-inch below height of cut.
- Powers off the reel spinning in the same direction for optimal lift and quality of cut.
- Can be used with or without the Powered Rear Roller Brush Kit, Model 03876.

Powered roller brushes fine tune fairways

Toro's optional powered rear roller brushes minimize unsightly grass clumping on fairways. Since most courses are mowed in the morning when grass tends to be wet, clippings naturally stick to rollers and build up. Then, when rollers are scraped, the sticky grass drops off in big clumps. By sweeping the rear rollers of Reelmaster units while mowing, these brushes remove grass clippings and disperse them more loosely. That's a big advantage because with roller brushes operators won't waste time and effort breaking up grass clumps left behind on fairways.

The brushes also make a big difference with other sticky substances on rollers such as bird droppings or tree seeds.

Tom Fischer is superintendent of Edinburgh USA Golf Course in Brooklyn, Minn. He says the brushes make a difference on his course.

"We don't have the clumping that we used to," he explains, "and our fairways look a lot cleaner."

Besides, an improvement in the appearance of his course, Fischer points out that the trouble-free roller brushes have cut down on his labor demands.

"We don't have to go out and pick up clippings," he says. "That was our alternative to keeping the grass off the fairways. Sometimes we even had to use a blower to

break up grass clumps."

Easy installation

The brushes are easy to install and operate. They use a reliable belt-driven system that is powered off the reel. Simply plug a brush into the driver on the end of the shaft and adjust it when the mowers are set up. The brushes work through a range of height of cuts, so fairways are always covered.

"The power brush attachment kit is quite economical, especially when you compare it to the labor you save on clump removal and after-cut maintenance," says Toro marketing manager Tony Ferguson. "Many superintendents are familiar with power brushes for dispersing grass clippings with greens mowers, so the concept is a proven one. Used in combination with turf groomers, superintendents can make their fairways as beautiful and playable as their greens."

National Mower introduces triplex mower

Designed with a low center of gravity and a heavy-duty front end, National Mower's 8400 hydrostatic triplex mower tackles hills, slopes, banks and edging. The mower's hydrostatic drive provides independent reel and ground speeds for an ideal cut at various speeds. Electric reel clutches turn on and off all three cutting reels simultaneously for added safety.

The 8400 includes power steering for extra control while trimming difficult areas or negotiating tight corners. The mower is powered by a 16-hp Briggs & Stratton Vanguard engine and has an 84-inch width of cut that covers 3.5 acres per hour. GCN



Designed with a low center of gravity and a heavy-duty front end, National Mower's 8400 hydrostatic triplex mower is designed to tackle the most difficult slopes, bands and edges.

Photo:National Mower