

MARKET WATCH

MAINTENANCE

Blade runners

Handling mower blades with care preserves quality and productivity at Mainscape.

By MARISA PALMIERI

At Mainscape's Naples, Fla., branch, the staff handles mower blades with care to give its military, homeowner association and commercial clients the best quality of cut without any dreaded "streaking."

If quality is subpar and callbacks occur, Branch Manager Jim Spano cringes at the thought of lost time.

"If there are streaks, we have to go back out and re-mow if it's a priority customer," he says. "Then we're just wasting gross margin dollars by going back out to an area that should have been treated correctly the first time."

To prevent such an instance the company is picky about its mower blade selection and maintenance to ensure success when handling blades for the 60 to 80 John Deere and Exmark mowers it runs daily.

RIGHT BLADES FOR THE RIGHT GRASS

Most of the turf Mainscape handles is St. Augustine grass, as well as Bahia and other varieties of *paspalum*. "Currently we like the high-lift Gator Mulcher blades," he says, noting the blade thickness is superior to many other aftermarket blades, resulting in a good quality of cut for the Mainscape clients' turf. "If we

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MAINTENANCE How to handle mower blades with care

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IRRIGATION Adding value with irrigation audits

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DESIGN/BUILD Co-op showroom concept presents opportunity

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LAWN/TREE CARE Some LCOs turn to organic soil amendments



Mainscape mechanics store extra sets of mower blades on racks (left) and disinfect them daily in a wash station.

don't order new mowers with the high-lift mulching blade, I'm willing to pay to have get them instead of trying out whatever they're putting on."

Spano notes it's a premium product—sets of three cost about \$50—but it's worth it not to have to have blades that cause "streaking."

MAINTAIN WITH CARE

Sharp blades are key. "Every day our mechanics get underneath, take off and put on new blades," Spano says, noting there are two sets of blades for every mower, which buys the mechanics some time with the sharpening process. "When we buy a new mower we just go ahead and order the second set of blades so it goes into our inventory."

Each mower has slot on a rack where its spare blades are stored before they're rotated back onto the mower. In addition to being sharpened daily, the mechanics disinfect them with a bleach-water mixture.

"That way we don't run the risk of spreading diseases from one property to another," he says.



Mainscape's Naples, Fla., branch upgrades its mower blades to improve its quality of cut.