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Ariens offers a series of mowers through its Gravely, EverRide and Great Dane lines.

For those unfamiliar with the sermon, the message is that stand-ons offer the best of both the walk-behind and mid-mount Z mowers.

"People are looking at replacements for both, for all the same reasons, Humphreys says. "You gain some efficiency; you have better visibility. You’re fit into tighter areas than a mid-mount Z."

Stand-ons have the power and speed of the mid-mount Zs, but they are typically lighter, which makes them safer.

"You don’t get the tippy-ness on a hill," explains Wright, who in 1997 was the first to build and sell a stand-on mower. Today, the company offers a variety of mowers in the Stander line. "A mid-mount Z, typically, will weigh 150 to 200 lbs. more than this machine. The stand-on design allows us to make (a mower) with less metal. It’s lighter, more agile; yet it has the straight out speed and the power to drive these blades.

“You get the double whammy effect — a more significant machine, and you get the benefit of it being a stand-on,” Wright continues.

For those not completely ready to give up their walk-behinds, Toro launched the GrandStand mower at the Green Industry Conference and Equipment Expo last year.

"Where operators don’t feel comfortable operating a stand-on in a ride-on mode, they can turn it into a walk behind,” Funk says. "It saves them from having to make the trip back to the trailer to switch to a walk-behind.”

Toro has been pleased with the response to its new mower.

“We’ve been surprised at how quickly things are taking off in those markets that were less well established,” Funk says.

As word continues to spread, more contractors are taking a look at stand-ons as a viable replacement for hydro walk-behinds and the mid-mount Zs.

"We’re getting the attention today, where people who’ve never had a Wright before — sort of dismissed us a bit — when they take a ride on the ZK, it’s kind of mind blowing," Wright says. "It’s a jaw dropper."

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Yes — buying *can* save you money

This year presents both challenges and opportunities when it comes to making capital expenditures for new equipment. Among the challenges are the trying economic times — which in and of themselves present some great opportunities to save on equipment costs.

Now more than ever, owners should be deliberate in their equipment-buying decisions. Obviously, if you are in a situation where the actual workload is questionable, these decisions should be planned for, but put off until the work actually materializes. This is a huge challenge when customers (or potential customers) put off renewal decisions or new customer targets wait until the season starts to make decisions. Some suppliers might allow you to place orders and delay deliveries until later dates. If the anticipated work does not materialize, you then can cancel or postpone the orders.

How do you know whether you are on the right track with your equipment management policies? For maintenance companies, if your cost for repairs, maintenance, operation (including fuel) and ownership (lease or annual depreciation cost) is in the 10% to 12% range of sales, you are managing the costs reasonably well — as long as it not at the expense of lost productivity.

**Functional obsolescence**

Functional obsolescence results in an impairment of the usefulness of a piece of equipment, either because of a design defect or an inability to be modified or upgraded to a condition that meets today's needs.

Many companies like to use equipment until it no longer works. Their belief seems to be, "If I can fix it and it runs, why lay out the capital to buy new?" However, manufacturers continue to improve equipment — from productivity, safety and environmental standpoints. Plus, there is a point with all equipment where the cost to repair and maintain it exceeds the cost to buy new.

Without good service records detailing repair costs, this decision becomes very subjective. One of the hardest things to measure is the effect on morale: Having unreliable equipment definitely demotivates operators. Down time or lost productivity due to outdated equipment can be hard to measure.

To avoid functional obsolescence, implement a rotation cycle to replace or retire equipment on a planned basis. For example, in a 12-month mowing market, after three seasons (some might argue two seasons of hard use), mowers are nearing the point where the cost to repair and maintain them exceeds the cost of buying new. Without a scheduled replacement plan, you can get swallowed up in repair costs and lost productivity.

**Standardization**

Some companies believe in standardizing their equipment palate. Obvious benefits include the ability to concentrate purchases with one or two key suppliers to improve purchasing power. Maintaining a more-limited parts inventory and developing a close relationship with a supplier so you can borrow replacement equipment if needed are two other incentives.

Less obvious are the benefits of a more simplified training requirement and standardization of equipment across crews, allowing movement of employees without loss of experience on equipment operation. Mechanics also become more proficient at maintaining and troubleshooting equipment.

Another advantage is that if you have multiple pieces of equipment and they all develop the same problem, it is a much easier warranty argument. In addition, most manufacturers know their good customers and often give them new equipment to try out, seeking their opinions on improvements.

As you consider your equipment budgets for this year, look at your overall plan on managing this important cost category. Take advantage of this unique opportunity to partner more with suppliers and purchase state-of-the-art equipment at good prices in today's increasingly competitive market.
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Licenses key to avoiding ‘PC police’

You’ve seen end-user license agreements (EULAs) before. You click through them every time you install a new piece of software. But have you ever read one? Do you know which of your children you’re giving away by agreeing to install? Most of us never give a thought to what those agreements say — or the effect they might have on our businesses if not followed.

EULAs come in all sorts. They generally are written to protect the software developer’s rights, and limit liabilities and damages from use of the software. But buried in the depths of these legal agreements are limits and restrictions that can add liabilities to your business — risks you might not be aware of.

On the front lines of software licensing enforcement is the Business Software Alliance (www.bsa.org). The BSA enforces software licensing through law enforcement raids, with fines reaching into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Such heavy-handed enforcement provides plenty of incentive to understand and follow proper licensing practices.

Academic or private (non-commercial) use

One of the most prevalent license issues is the use of academic or home-licensed software on business computers. Most software utilities available for download are licensed for free use only in academic and non-commercial settings, and require payment for business use.

The trap most businesses fall into is assuming that if the program will run without a license key, no payment is required. The software developer is effectively putting you on the honor system to pay for the software if it’s used in a business setting.

Non-transferable licenses

Depending on the software vendor, the EULA might limit your ability to transfer the ownership of the license to a third party. This tactic is designed to increase new license sales by removing the secondary “used” market. Where this becomes a sticking point is when you buy or sell a business where software licenses are carried on the balance sheet.

Carefully reviewing the text of these software licenses can ensure you aren’t paying for licenses that will not be recognized by the vendor when you need upgrades or support. And if you’re selling a business, a simple review can make sure you aren’t opening yourself up to a misrepresentation of your assets.

Open source software

One of the most small business-friendly licensing models is called open source software, or OSS. Software that falls into this category is generally free for use in both business and home settings. Limitations, if any, are related to modification and re-distribution of the software, and therefore not much of a concern for the typical small business.

In recent years, OSS has rivaled some of the most successful commercial software. The Firefox Web browser from the Mozilla Foundation (www.mozilla.com/firefox), and the OpenOffice office productivity suite (www.openoffice.org) are two such free solutions. Consider looking into OSS to lower your information technology budget and limit your software licensing risks.

So the next time you install a piece of software, take a minute to review the license agreements. You might just find issues that your corporate attorney might want to review. Remember, it only takes a few minutes of well-spent time to be safe and worry-free.
WE'RE USED to smelling roses, jasmine and mint in gardens, but chocolate? Licorice? Cinnamon? There are a surprising number of fragrances and fragrant plants, and homeowners are beginning to rediscover them.

"These days fragrance is coming back," says Marita Tewes Tyrolt, horticultural director at the University of Utah's Red Butte Garden, which has a fragrance garden of about half an acre. It has about five types of fragrant trees, 30 shrubs and sub-shrubs, including herbs, and close to 40 perennials. They add annuals for seasonal displays, usually about five in spring/early summer and 10 to 12 in summer/fall.

There are two types of fragrant plants, she says. Some, like lilacs, roses and freesias produce essential oils on their petals to lure pollinators. They're called "free" because they give their scent freely. The ones that attract daytime pollinators, such as butterflies, hummingbirds and bees, tend to be less fragrant than the plants that attract nighttime ones, like moths and bats.

Other plants, such as marigolds and herbs, produce essential oils on their leaves, stems, seeds or bark, often to repel leaf-eating predators. They're called "fast," because they release their fragrances when the oils are rubbed, bruised or crushed.

"Each plant produces a constant amount of essential oil," says Fritz Kollmann, a horticulturalist and crew leader at the fragrance garden, but the intensity of the fragrance can vary according to the time of day, humidity and heat. Flowers that open in the evening tend to have the strongest fra-
grance in the evening. Different essential oils oxidize at different temperatures. And some scents tend to hang in the air when the humidity is higher.

You have to be careful about cultivars, Tewes Tyrolt says. Some are intoxicatingly fragrant and others have no fragrance at all. In many of the newer ones, fragrance has been sacrificed for other attributes, such as size and color of the blooms, hardiness and resistance to pests.

And don’t assume that fragrance is always an asset.

“Fragrant means that a plant has an odor,” she says. Some, like roses, are pleasant to everyone. Some have one cultivar with a pleasant fragrance, such as the wayfaringtree (Viburnum lantana), and another with a distinctly unpleasant one, such as Siebold Viburnum (Viburnum sieboldii), which has leaves that smell like burnt rubber when they’re crushed, according to the website of Cornell University’s Department of Horticulture.

Then there’s the stink tree (Alianthus altissima). More commonly called the tree of heaven, its flowers and twigs emit a smell that some have compared to cat urine.

“You have to think what is pollinating the flowers,” Tewes Tyrolt says. If it’s beetles or flies, they’ll be attracted to red trilliums, also known as stinking Benjamin (Trillium erectum), or durian, which smell like rotten meat.

Fragrant flowers

The same plants can be trees in one part of the country and large shrubs in another, shrubs in one part and perennials in another, or perennials in one part and annuals in another. The Latin name is included below when there may be some confusion about the names and when one cultivar is especially fragrant.

“Many trees are fragrant in the spring,” Tewes Tyrolt says. “The littleleaf linden (Tilia cordata) has flowers that smell like chocolate to some people.”

One of Kollmann’s favorites, the mimosa tree (Albizia julibrissin ‘Rosea’) “creates an incredible effect,” he says. “They bloom for two and a half months. The flowers tickle your nose.”

Other trees with fragrant flowers include the black locust (Robinia pseudoacacia), sweet tea olive (Osmanthus fragrans) and magnolias. Fragrant shrubs include witch hazel (Hamamelis), lilacs (Syringa), two different shrubs called mock orange (Philadelphus and Pittosporum), roses and viburnums.

“We have a heavy focus on perennials,” Tewes Tyrolt says. Some of the most fragrant are peonies, lily of the valley, sweet William and carnations (both Dianthus), hostas, heliotrope and the vine, clematis. Some fragrant annuals are hyssop (Agastache), sweet alyssum (Lobularia maritima), pansies and violets (both Viola), and stocks (Matthiola), and the vines, nasturtium (Tropaeolum), sweet pea (Lathyrus odoratus) and corkscrew vine (Vigna caracalla). Bulbs with fragrant flowers include irises, hyacinths and freesias.

Flowers that open in the evening tend to have the most intense fragrance. “A new evening primrose (Oenothera fremontii ‘Shimmer’) is just incredible,” Kollmann says. “It has thin silver leaves, an amazing subtle fragrance and a carpet of yellow flowers that blooms all summer.”

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ANTHONY TESSELAAR PLANTS VARIETY FOCUS: FLOWER CARPET® ‘SCARLET’

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Other evening-fragrant perennials include orchids (Cestrum nocturnum), Oriental lilies (Lilium), fragrant columbine (Aquilegia fragrans) and four-o’clocks (Mirabilis jalapa). Annuals include flowering tobacco (Nicotiana) and night-scented stocks (Matthiola), and shrubs, daphne, gardenias, night-blooming jessamine (Caesalpinia nocturnum) and frangipani (Plumeria). Tuberose (Polianthes tuberosa) is a fragrant bulb.

Where to plant

Plants are more fragrant when their growing conditions suit them, but many, including the mints, sweet woodruff, honeysuckle, black locust and the most fragrant heliotrope, are weedy. Choose plants that suit the conditions in your area but won’t become invasive.

Most fragrant plants prefer sun to partial shade. For areas with denser shade, plant lily of the valley, hostas, some gardenias, orchids, lilies and jasmines. Group plants with similar needs for water together, if possible. In the fragrance garden, the more water-needy ones, especially the annuals, grow inside the beds, bordered by the more water-thrifty ones, such as herbs, Kollmann says.

Ask clients to check the fragrances first. Different people prefer different scents, and some can find the fragrance of one overpowering while others may find it more delicate, Tewes Tyrolt warns.

Grow fragrant plants outside windows, in window boxes, on patios and next to seating areas. Put evening-fragrant plants near places people spend their evenings, or outside bedroom windows, and plants whose foliage has to be crushed or brushed for fragrance near walkways. If they’re mat-like, such as creeping thyme, German chamomile (Matriculata recutita or Chamomilla recutita) and the apple-scented Roman chamomile (Chamaemelum nobile), plant them between pavers.

Use containers for plants that need to be brought inside in the winter and for containing invasive plants. Keep fragrances from blowing away by putting plants under arbors or along fences, walls and hedges. Plant fragrant evergreens for windbreaks. Take advantage of reflected heat by planting against walls or on patios.

Planting for fragrance makes garden planning more exciting, Tewes Tyrolt says. “It forces us to come up with more unique solutions.”

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