

Out with the old and in with the new? Michael Bird draws up a list of what's new for '95

As clubs prepare and finalise budgets for the coming season, greenkeepers will find that there is no shortage of innovative and interesting machinery set to make its commercial debut on British turf.

Some may have been at work for a season or more already, most likely on North American courses, while others will have been on trial during 1994 with selected greenkeepers in Britain and continental Europe.

Whatever the preparations for launch onto the UK market, no machine will be suitable for every course. Turf conditions, climate, maintenance regimes, staffing levels, required standards, purchase price, running costs and a host of other factors must always be considered before making the final purchase decision.

Whenever possible, selection should be made with the help of a demonstration. If appropriate and practicable, the item should remain on the course for a few days so that its performance, ease of use, maintenance requirements, running costs and general suitability can be better assessed.

One machine which attracts more attention than most others is the greens mower. Plenty has been written already about the Ransomes E-Plex – the first all-electric greens mower in the world to go to work commercially.

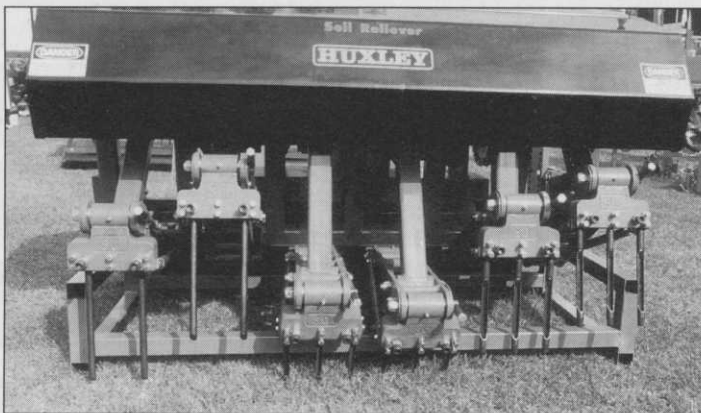
To prove that it is not abandoning the concept of conventionally-powered greens machines, Ransomes has introduced the Greensplex 160, available with either a 16hp petrol or 17hp diesel engine and equipped with "traditional" hydrostatic transmission, power steering and hydraulically-driven reels.

The company says that the Greensplex has been developed with continuous input from greenkeepers to provide a precision cut, excellent manoeuvrability and maximum ease of operation and servicing.

Key features of the machine are three steerable cutting units (9 or 11 blades) with an overall mowing width of 1.6m (62in) and minimum cutting height of 2mm (5/64in), variable mowing speed settings, an uncluttered driver's platform with column-mounted controls, in-situ backlapping and a kick pedal for lift, lower and engagement of the cutting units.

Already proven in the USA, the Greensplex 160 is expected to win the approval of many golf greenkeepers in Britain thanks to its exceptional ease of use and maintenance.

Coming to a course near you ... soon



Huxley Soil Reliever

The latest greens mower offering from John Deere is the walk-behind 220 model, which has a 60cm (22in) cut and is equipped with a 3.7hp petrol engine, 11 blade reel and choice of standard or tournament bedknives, the latter giving a cutting height down to 2.8mm (7/64in).

The machine's loop-style handlebars incorporate an "operator presence system" with the on/off switch and mowing controls conveniently located to hand. Attachments includes a vertical cutter and rotary brush.

Jacobsen's Greens King 418 has a narrow 46cm (18in) cut designed specifically for work on severely undulating greens without scalping. The walk-behind mower has an 11-bladed reel capable of cutting down to 2mm (5/64in).

Power comes from a 4hp petrol engine with three belts providing traction and reel drive. Other features of the 418 are self-adjusting, tapered roller bearings on the reel, an automotive-type differential housed within the traction drum and the options of grooved rollers and a Turf Groomer.

The advantages of relief grinding precision mowing reels are regularly spelt out by cylinder manufacturers and the makers of the grinding machines designed to

keep cylinders in peak condition.

Relief grinding involves removing metal at a pre-determined angle from behind the leading edge of each cylinder blade to reduce the contact area between the rotating cylinder and the bottom blade. The result is less friction and wear, helping maintain a keener cutting edge and longer cylinder life.

Until now, relief grinding has normally involved constant attention from the engineer, repositioning the cylinder manually for each blade being relief ground. Supreme Mowing has changed all that with the introduction of an automatic relief grinding attachment for its Supreme System and Golf Leader cylinder grinders.

The device automatically rotates and locks the cylinder in place at the correct angle prior to each pass of the grinding stone along the individual blades, resulting in faster, safer and more convenient operation.

Rotary mowers are not usually considered as the first choice for precision grass cutting. However, the roller mower, with its height-adjustable rollers in front of and behind the blades, follows an identical contour-hugging principle to the greens mower making it ideal for close, even cutting of undulating areas such as the

semi-rough and other open areas of longer, more formal grass.

Dowdeswell has introduced an uprated version of its 2.4m (8ft) Roller Mower fitted with three blades in place of the previous four. The result is said to create improved air flow beneath the hood and a more even spread of material across the complete cutting width of the machine.

Suitable for tractors from 25hp to 55hp, the machine is also available with a 1.8m (6ft) cut width.

Helping to eliminate double-handling of materials while reducing the effort and manpower needed to refill top dressers and fertiliser spreaders is a new high-lift dump trailer from Ultra Plant of Dungannon, Co Tyrone.

The 4 tonne capacity trailer has a tipping angle of 50deg and a rear vertical clearance of 1.68m (66in) at full ram extension. Precise control of flow is achieved by a guillotine-action rear door and the unit is equipped with four flotation tyres. Options include hydraulic brakes, full road lighting kit and extension sides.

Soil compaction is a problem which needs to be constantly addressed if turf is to be maintained in peak condition. A new concept in deep tine aeration will be making its UK debut in 1995 following the appointment of Huxleys as UK distributor for the American-built Soil Reliever range.

Available in two working widths – 1.5m and 2m (60in and 80in), the Soil Reliever is able to work to a maximum depth of 40cm (16in) using 19mm (3/4in) solid tines. Other lengths and diameters are available in both solid and hollow-coring form, suitable for greens and fairway treatment. Tractor requirement is from 30hp.

Said to be the first walk-behind hollow corer capable of working deeper than 76cm (3in), the Greencare Coremaster 6/150 from Hardi has six legs each equipped with two tines. Working depth is adjustable from 12mm to 150mm (0.5in to 6in) to help alleviate compaction pans created by feet, equipment and years of treatment at a constant depth. Both 12mm and 16mm (0.5in and 0.6in) diameter follow corers are available.

Increased commonality of parts with other machines in the company's range has resulted from improvements made to the Lloyds Leda five gang trailed mower.

An all-hollow box section frame has enabled simpler fabrication while helping to increase strength and reduce weight. Lloyds has also added the option of nine-bladed welded cylinders to the four, five or six bladed units previously offered.