

THE BIG CLEAN UP

Roland Taylor examines the problems autumn brings and looks at some of the solutions.

It's time again for those autumn leaves to start to fall. They may inspire song writers and poets to pick up their pens, but for most of us it is a time consuming operation that seems never ending. How many times have you cleared away the previous nights fall, only to turn round and find that mother nature has played a cruel joke on you by depositing twice as many leaves over your cleared area?

Do not despair, help is at hand in the form of a host of mechanical aids. All are designed to make clearing up leaves and other general debris as easy as possible.

In the beginning there were rakes and brooms, then there were blowers. These come in all shapes and forms from hand held petrol powered unit to larger push and self-propelled models. A small unit is an effective replacement

for the traditional broom. It is far quicker, more efficient and less strenuous to use. A fan produces a strong blast of air to move leaves and other debris in whatever direction you require. This makes them ideal for all those awkward areas, such as

under seats in gutters, ditches and among flower beds. By careful manoeuvring the leaves can be blown into a heap, ready for collection. Most of the hand held units are easily converted into a suction model with a collection facility. This, however, is generally



more suited for domestic use as the collecting bag is relatively small.

Pedestrian and tractor-mounted blowers are ideally suited for use on large open spaces. These units produce a very powerful air flow and are available with a wide choice of engine sizes. Along with clearing leaves off the greens they will also remove dew. Some of the larger blowers have a suction and delivery hose attachment as an optional extra, to suck up leaves and deposit them into trailer or vehicle.

Specifically designed truck loaders are now readily available. These units can be mounted on to a trailer or a vehicle's tail board. They make the loading of leaves and any other litter or rubbish fast and easy.

Greenkeepers looking for a self-contained leaf and litter collector will not be disappointed. There are plenty to choose from including push, self-propelled and ride-on models. With these machines

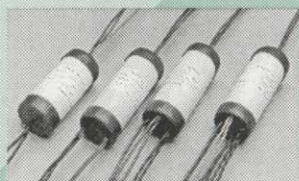
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the bulk is reduced as it passes through the unit – this ensures the collecting system is used to its maximum. Wanderhoses are usually available as an optional extra. These enable the operator to clear awkward areas, drains, ditches and flower beds.

It should not be forgotten that most rotary mowers will collect leaves off grassed areas and that for smaller tractors there are sweeping attachments available.

In recent years we have seen the introduction of mulching and recycling mowers. The suppliers of this type of machine claim that the system will finely chop leaves and deposit them back into the earth. The effectiveness of this method will be dependent on the volume of leaves involved. Large amounts are going to be difficult to reduce to a level where they virtually disappear. However, recycling has its advantages.

For areas of where the leaf fall is very large there are tractor-mounted units. These fall into

two categories; combination units and specific sweeping systems.

The combination units are usually a flail mower that can be used for cutting light and heavy rough, adapted for scarifying, plus leaf and litter collection. A large hopper is fitted and this is often available with high-lift option. They can only be used on grass – this could be a disadvantage where there are paths, roadways and car parks that have to be cleared.

Sweepers are an alternative. These incorporate a rotary brush plus impeller that creates a vacuum to suck the leaves into the collector. As the material passes through the system it is shredded

and reduced in volume by as much as 50 per cent – thus minimising the number of times the collector has to be emptied. Brush and suction heads are usually available in a choice of widths from 2 metre to 2.5 m. These are usually fully floating both vertically and horizontally, which enables them to follow the ground contours closely.

A wanderhose for clearing ditches, awkward areas and even emptying rubbish bins is available as an optional extra.

Self-propelled ride-on sweepers are usually specifically designed for collecting general litter, as well as leaves. Generally the average golf course has insufficient


work throughout the year to justify the cost of one of these machines.

Before making any choice of available equipment it is important to determine exactly what problems are likely to be encountered. A large unit may look good on paper, but is its size going to limit the number of areas where it can be used, thus reducing its cost effectiveness. At this stage expert advice should be sought. It will probably be necessary to consider more than one type of appliance for your particular needs. There is nothing like seeing equipment in action, so an on-site demonstration is a sure way of finding out exactly what the machine's capabilities are.

If this autumn you find a member of your staff leaning on a broom or rake, having just gathered up a great pile of leaves, consider for a second – there is much better, easier and faster way of carrying out this operation.




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