

# Lower your outgoings by hiring what you need...

**Roland Taylor takes a look at the option of machinery hire.**

**A** combination of restricted budgets and limited staff can often cause headaches for a greenkeeper, especially when certain work needs to be carried out – but there are often no funds available to buy the necessary equipment.

There is, however, an alternative solution to this problem – hire. This is not the same as leasing of large machinery, but the daily, weekly, monthly or longer hire of specific specialist equipment.

There are several advantages to hiring. The most important one being that large sums of money do not have to be found to purchase a particular piece of machinery. Capital is not tied up in an item that may only be used for short periods at certain times of the year.

Having the latest machine that is right for the job enables the operation to be carried out quickly and efficiently. There are no maintenance costs to take into account and, in the event of a breakdown, downtime is minimised and there are usually no repair bills. From the financial aspect, all hiring costs can be offset against profits.

Another big advantage is that by hiring a piece of equipment first, you can then assess performance and decide whether it is worth buying.

An increasing number of hire companies are recognising the importance and value of what they have to offer greenkeepers. As a result they are now catering for this market.

In the UK there are approximately 8,500 hire outlets, many of which are stores belonging to group or chain.

Hiring from one of these groups or a dedicated landscape/plant hire outlet does mean that should a machine break down you are more likely to get a replacement quickly. Smaller outlets who do not specialise in hire may not have sufficient back-up stock to provide this sort of service.

Bearing in mind these benefits it is worth looking at what type of equipment is available.

## **Earth moving and holes**

The skidster consists of a basic power unit which can be fitted with a trenching attachment for laying drainage or cable. Several sizes of bucket can be fitted for moving soil and levelling sites.

When it comes to fencing or planting trees, there is a variety of earth augers available as either attachments for compact tractors or self-powered hand-held units. Using one of these is the fastest and easiest way to digging holes.

For more specialist soil preparation the use of levelling graders, stone rakes, pickers and buriers will eliminate the need for time consuming hand raking.

Rotary cultivators and two-wheel tractors make fast work of breaking down soil to produce a fine tilth.



Tree stumps are easily removed with either a hand-held or pedestrian operated stump grinder

### Trees, leaves and hedges

Most tree work needs to be carried out by an arboriculturalist or person skilled in the use of a chainsaw. When a tree has been felled there is often a the stump to remove. This can be done using a hand-held stump grinder or larger pedestrian operated unit.

For disposing of light timber and brushwood, a chipper is ideal. The material produced can then be spread directly back into the soil, thus eliminating the need to load on to a trailer before transporting to a disposal site.

Hiring equipment for clearing up leaf fall will speed up the operation considerably. Vacuums and blowers do the job of rakes and brooms; and truck loaders suck the piles of leaves directly into a trailer or other collecting unit.

On a golf course, the chances are that a hedge cutter is probably only used a few times each year, so it makes sense to hire one when it is needed

### Wild flowers and grass

An increasing number of courses are recognising the importance of preserving natural habitats. As a result, areas are being managed to encourage their development. In the case of wild flowers, the vegetation is only cut once a year and for this a reciprocating or some rotary mowers are ideal machines.

The brushcutter too may be used very few times – so again it is worth thinking of hire.

Ditches and banks often present a problem as they are cut infrequently and for these there are flail and rotary mowers – items of machinery that are not always part of the fleet.

For clearing waterways, a tractor with backhoe is better than standing knee-deep with a spade in freezing water.

### Turf management

As far a hiring turf management equipment is concerned, each individual club will have different requirements. A large part of the decision to buy will be based on the frequency of use.

### Other useful equipment

Pressure washers are ideal for cleaning off winter dirt, verdigris and moss from walls and hard surfaces. It can also be used to wash down equipment before servicing.

A portable pump will take care of flooding and a generator puts power where it is needed.

Do not forget your workshops – there are plenty of specialist tools available for hire that make a repair easier to carry out.



A hedgecutter is probably used only very occasionally at a golf course so it makes sense to hire one when it is needed. Below: Earth augers make fast work of tree planting or producing post holes

### What to look for

Asking the right questions when you hire is all important. Most good hire outlets will be able to advise on the most suitable equipment for your particular requirement, but you should find out:

- The age of the piece of machinery.
- Its work capacity.
- Are there any hidden charges in addition to the rate, such as VAT, delivery and collection?
- Will instruction be given to the operator, plus advice on the type of protective clothing

certain that the personnel operating it are trained in its safe use and wear the correct protective clothing.

It is worth checking to see who is responsible for sharpening blades and other wearing parts once the machine has been returned.

The popularity of hire and the rise in the number of hire companies is a firm indication that many commercial end users are turning in this direction. As an alternative to purchase, or for the odd labour intensive job, hire is certainly a very cost effective solution.



he/she should be wearing?

■ Whether you will be charged for any damage that may occur?

■ How quickly will they replace a piece of equipment in the event of a breakdown?

### Your responsibilities

Hiring does not mean that you can forget your responsibilities, so make sure you read the small print.

Insurance cover is essential both for the equipment and the operator. If the machine is stolen whilst under hire to you, then you are responsible not only for replacing the machine, but also the cost of hire for each day that it is missing.

The hire company must supply the machine in safe and proper working order, together with the necessary safety and operating instruction. It is the hirer's responsibility to make