

Roland Taylor takes a look at the kind of jobs not necessarily on your job description which can have you stretching high wide or low!

Those awkward jobs



For many readers looking after a golf course not only entails matters greenkeeping it often encompasses what amounts to estate management. This involves being responsible for a wide variety of other aspects including trees, hedges, wild flower and natural sites, watercourses and ornamental areas. In addition, car parks and paths may also come under a Course Manager's control.

To maintain all these areas can absorb a considerable amount of extra labour and time, so any jobs need to be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible. Today there is usually a piece of outdoor power equipment that will simplify and speed up a task, so it is worth looking around when at the planning and scheduling stage of these operation.

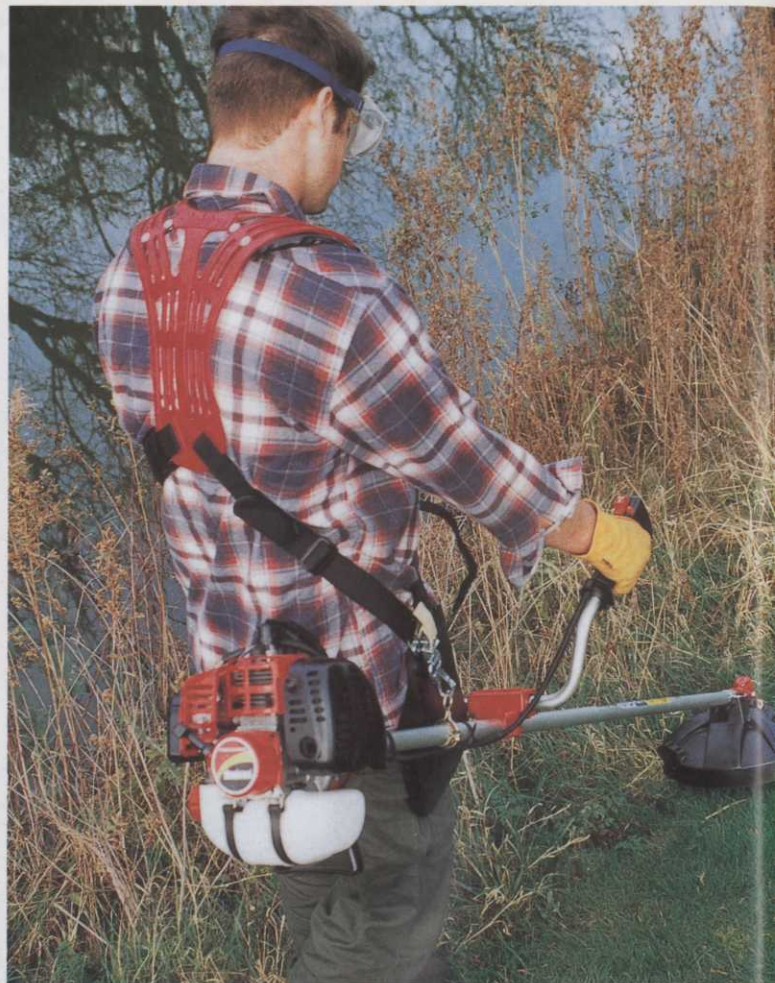
Those awkward jobs



Trees

These need attention from time to time, such as pruning, shaping, or removing dead or infected timber. Cutting back high branches can often present a problem. If a ladder or platform is used, in the interests of safety more than one member of staff should be present, thus tying up labour. Access might also be a problem, making the use of these types of structures impractical. One solution could be long armed pruners - these can reach heights up to 14ft. While they will deal with smaller branches when it comes to thicker ones a saw is needed. Although some pruners have the facility for fitting a saw attachment, the task of cutting branches at the full extension is not easy. In the last few years manufacturers have come up with another answer - powered pole pruners. These are small chainsaw cutting heads mounted at the end of a long drive shaft with a lightweight two-stroke engine to provide power. There is a choice of guidebar lengths suitable for dealing with most branches. Lengths of shafts vary between models, the average being about three metres. Longer than this and the unit could be unwieldy and difficult to operate.

If the branches to be removed are very thick then it is best to use the services of a professional arboriculturist. Once the timber is on the ground it can be quickly sawn up using a small chainsaw. The operator of this piece of equipment will need to be fully trained in its correct use,



plus all safety aspects relating to it.

Another method of dealing with material from tree maintenance, plus naturally fallen branches, is chipping. Chippers come in all shapes and sizes so there is one to suit virtually every application. This is an ideal form of disposal as the results can be left under the trees, used on paths or as weed suppressant on ornamental areas.

Hedges

Apart from shaping and giving a tidy appearance trimming also encourages new growth to thicken the hedge, especially low down.

There are plenty of hedgcutters available and these come with a wide choice of blade lengths, the longest being 42 inches. Single or double-sided cutting systems are available. Where the hedges are high, then some form of ladder or platform has in the past been necessary. These can slow the operation down and require more labour. An alternative, especially if the run of hedge is short or a ditch in front makes access difficult, is the latest introduction - extended hedge trimmers. These consist of a long shaft with an articulating head on to which is mounted a reciprocating cutterbar. This system enables the blade to be set at different angles to accommodate the shape of the hedge or bushes. The units can also be used for cutting a ditch side or riverbank.

On the edge

Keeping edges trim, especially

around bunkers, can be a very time consuming operation, but there are now plenty of machines available to make this job faster. The units are generally based on a vertical cutting blade with depth control and the speed at which the operation is carried out depends on how fast the operator walks. On some models the cutting head can be swivelled for trimming that feather of grass found around course furniture, walls and path edges.

Water courses

Because of the microclimate these create, vegetation thrives and tends to be lush and if left soon restricts the flow of water. Where there are long runs of ditches or streams, a flail mower on an extended arm can be used, but because a tractor is involved the banks must be sound. An alternative is a brushcutter or clearing saw. As these can be used on other areas around the course, they are a valuable addition to the machinery store. For clearing watercourses, the backpack models can be an advantage as they give the operator more flexibility especially in restricted areas. There are various cutting heads available for dealing with most of the brushwood and vegetation likely to be encountered in these areas.

Tree planting or fencing

From time to time, replacements have to be made, and digging holes for these takes time and often a lot of effort. The earth drill or auger makes



the operation fast and easy and with the right equipment one man can carry it out.

Earth drills come in all forms and sizes including tractor-mounted, skidster attachments and highly portable one-man models. There is a wide choice of hole diameters and depths of drilling available.

One of these units is a 'must' for any tree planting or fencing operation.

Laying drainage or electricity cables

Where this is needed, a trencher will not only make the job faster it will also cause minimal damage to the surface. There are small units with their own engine or attachments for skidsters and tractors. The width of trench and depth they will excavate will depend on the machine.

Natural habitats

In recent years the importance of preserving natural habitats has been recognised, especially on areas such as golf courses where the levels of disturbance are minimal. These sites require a management programme that involves a degree of maintenance. If left unattended the stronger and more dominant plant life takes over at the expense of fragile rarer species.

Some of the equipment already mentioned is suitable for use in these areas but, depending on what is growing there, other machines may be required. Where wild flowers are

being encouraged, it will be necessary to mow at specific times and remove all the cut material, so a mower with good collection facilities is required.

Wheeled brushcutters are suitable for keeping pathways open and the hand-held models can be used for removing unwanted saplings and brambles.

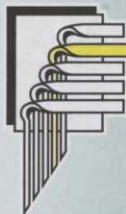
Where heavier growth such as bracken, heather or larger sapling has to be dealt with there are now ride-on brushcutters suitable for these areas.

Hard surface areas

Over time these areas become ingrained with dirt, lichens, moss and algae. A pressure washer will quickly remove these deposits bringing the surface back to its original colour. In addition, these units are ideal for washing down machinery.

There are plenty of sweepers and vacuum collectors available for removing litter, leaves and other debris from these sites. These include hand-held, pedestrian operated, tractor-mounted and self-propelled models. Often these type of units are an attachment for another piece of equipment, so when deciding what to buy it is worth asking if one is available that will fit on your existing piece of machinery.

All the equipment mentioned in this feature is available to hire, so unless there is sufficient work to justify the capital outlay, this would be the ideal way getting that extra assistance in making your job easier.



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