

The introduction of the utility vehicle as an alternative method of transporting materials, tools, people and powered equipment is investigated by Roland Taylor...

A2B? ATV



Above: Textron's E-Z-GO Workhorse has the ability to transport people, tools and equipment with relative ease around the course

Transporting materials, tools, people and powered equipment can absorb a lot of time during the day plus in some cases tying up the towing vehicle when it could be used for other jobs. As mowing equipment has increasingly become self-powered the

need for the conventional tractor has, and is, gradually diminishing. This has led to the introduction of the utility vehicle as an alternative method of transportation. These have many similar features to ATVs, which are also used on some courses.

In its most rudimentary form the utility vehicle is a carrying platform with its own power source and today this can be petrol, diesel, electric or LPG. From this basic form each manufacturer has added their range of refinements.

A2B? ATV



Above: The Mule 2510 combines a diesel powerplant with spacious practicality

Below: The large loading boot area of Textron's E-Z-GO Workhorse



When considering one of these as a prime mover of materials the first item on the buying checklist should be - carrying capacity. Determine your specific requirements throughout the year and add a percentage for the unforeseen. This will provide a realistic figure from which to start looking at the choices available. There seems very little point in investing in a piece of equipment with a large carrying capacity that is not going to be fully utilised. Another point to take into account at this stage is the method of unloading. Does it have a tipping facility and is this manually or hydraulically operated?

Once the weight range has been established it is time to consider the ground pressure specifications of each of the machines that can take the payload you require. As a unit will very likely be travelling over some sensitive grassed areas, the lesser the ground pressure when loaded the better it will be for the turf.

Good traction without damage to the turf is also another factor to be looked at. Some terrain may be uneven or steep so the unit's stability and balance will be important. These vehicles are designed to travel over all types of ground conditions but some do it better than others and with less chance of damage to the surface. There are two and four wheel versions available and a differential lock for more traction is offered on some models. Which to choose will depend on the type of work and the areas on which the vehicle is going to be used.

Manoeuvrability and turning circles are also important aspects to consider. Whilst most units have a four-wheel configuration there are some on the market with three - these maybe the answer if there are a lot of confined areas involved. Power steering is a must on any of these units, if only to make life easier for the operator.

Given the undulating surfaces these



Above: Along with fairways, Textron's E-Z-GO Workhorse also handles loose terrain

types of vehicles often have to travel over user comfort is a point worth considering. Check out the following on the units you are considering; type of suspension, user friendly and safety features, plus the availability of optional cab and ROPS. Three-point linkage is either standard or an extra on many of the utility vehicles now on the UK market. The addition of this system or another towing facility enables a host of turf care attachments

to be used, so finding out the towing capacity is another item for the buying list.

Some manufacturers offer a choice of flatbeds and these are available as full size, 2/3 or 1/3 beds. A range of sides can also be added.

There are a number of sprayers and spreaders now designed specifically for use on a utility vehicle's flatbed. These add-ons can make this type of vehicle a more cost-effective proposition.

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A2B? ATV

All Terrain Vehicles

While many of these fall into the same category as utility vehicles there are a number of models that are in a class of their own. The question has to be asked - do these have a place in the golf course machinery shed? The answer has to be that they are not everyone's cup of tea, but for some an ATV is the solution to a particular problem. One suspects this type of vehicle is more at home on a links or moorland courses although having said that any course with a great deal of woodland could also benefit. A redeeming feature of ATVs is their size and ability to go virtually anywhere and because of this they can save time and money when it comes to onsite work, such as greens, tees and bunker maintenance. Their low ground pressure means that materials and equipment can be transported at times when, because of waterlogged or soft ground conditions, it would be unwise to use larger equipment.

Models are now available with selectable two and four-wheel drive, plus automatic transmission. Ground clearance is important on these types

of ATVs so pay particular attention to the suspension systems being offered and the protection the engine and transmission units have from damage.

A trailer can be towed and some units have a built on carrying platform. Sprayers are a popular and useful addition and a number of manufacturers now have units in their ranges for these machines.

Apart from being a workhorse an ATV is also useful in an emergency and with most courses stretching over a considerable acreage, they can be a very fast way of travelling to the furthestmost points.

There is still the perceived idea that these machines are more for sport than working units but as many users have discovered this is a complete myth.

It is clearly evident by the number of new utility vehicles and ATVs coming onto the market that manufacturers have recognised there is a need to offer alternative methods of transporting materials, equipment and people in the amenity sector. As a result there are now plenty of models to choose from.

To ensure you get the right one for your requirements it is worth spending time formulating just what you actually want from a utility vehicle or ATV, the ground conditions it is likely to be used on - then test driving some before deciding. The right one for your requirements can save a lot of time and money.

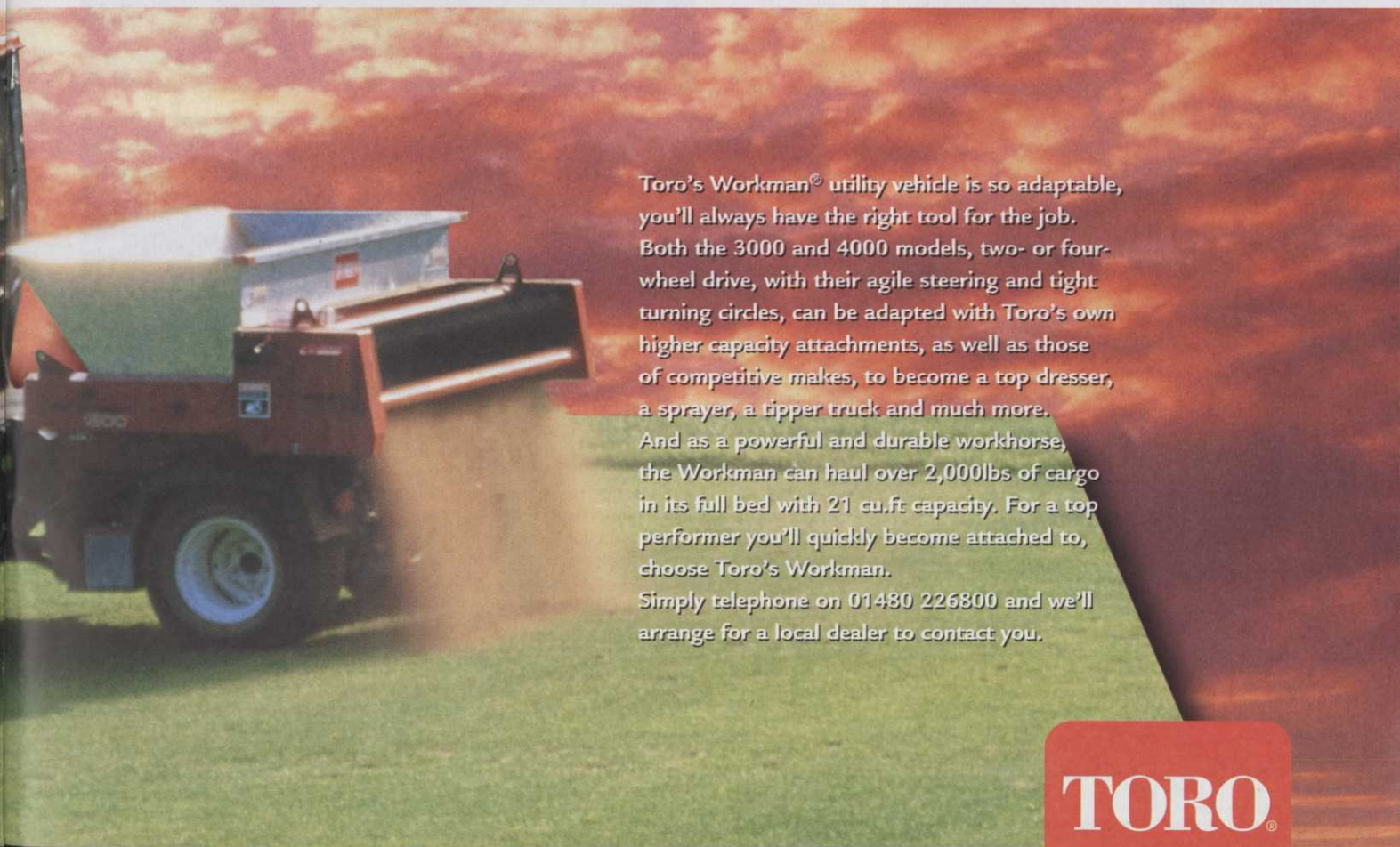


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Left and above: Kawasaki's latest flagship model, the KVF650-A packs features not out of place in most modern saloon cars



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