

# If I had a Hammer...

Autumn is probably a time of the year when course construction work climbs the list of priorities. It's that point when often a review is made of the present facilities and what work is necessary or can be done to improve them. No doubt for large reconstruction projects, such as drainage, landscaping or the rebuilding of a green, will be undertaken by outside contractors. It is those smaller ones that greenkeeping staff are more likely to undertake themselves and to aid them in carrying out this work and make it as easy as possible; manufacturers have come up with the answers.

Moving earth involves digging holes, making heaps or cultivating and levelling. A visit to a plant show demonstrates how much equipment there is out there to accommodate virtually any situation. If you want to, you could "move mountains".



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## Roland Taylor looks at the tools of the trade and the options there for you when you come to undertake construction work.

### BACKHOES & LOADERS

For the average golf course the most useful piece of kit, for moving soil, is going to be a backhoe and front loader. These come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some tractor companies providing purpose built systems for their own units. There are also a number of specialist manufacturers of these particular attachments.

Another alternative is one of the small, complete self powered, machines which are on the market.

Whatever the choice there is usually a wide range of digging buckets available, including narrow trenching ones and those designed for cleaning ditches or riverbanks.

### SKIDSTERS

The skidster is basically a self propelled, pedestrian operated unit, which has either a petrol or diesel engine that drives a hydraulic system. A wide range of attachments can be quickly fitted to, or removed from, this power source. A list of attachments shows the versatility of a skidster. These include: various bucket widths, multi-levellers, rotary brushes, hydraulically operated dozer blades, tine rippers, pallet forks, concrete breakers, post-hole borers and trenchers.

One of the main advantages of this type of machine is its ability to get into, and work in very confined areas.

### CULTIVATION

There are times when the ground will need cultivating and unlike the 1960s there are a lot fewer pedestrian tillers now available. The choice is either one with a front rotary bladed assembly or one at the rear behind two drive wheels. While either of these will do the job, a word of warning is needed. The rotary cultivator, if used consistently on a site, can form a pan below the surface at its maximum working depth, which could result in drainage problems in the future.



Blec Laser Grader

### STONE BURIERS

For large areas there are tractor mounted stone burying and soil renovators. These come in various working widths. A heavy-duty blade

assembly is contra rotated into the ground where it throws soil, rocks and other debris up into a sorting screen, which then directs the stone and rubbish into the bottom of the trench created by the rotor. The finer soil passes through the screen onto the top where it is levelled off. The site is also rolled to firm up the surface ready for sowing or turf laying tractors of between 80hp and 150hp, depending on the size of the machine, required. One company offers a pedestrian version of this machine; it has a 60cm working width.

Where it is necessary to remove stones, before seeding or turfing, the motorised stone rakes make fast work of this operation. These units consist of a series of steel tines that are set at an angle, so the unwanted material is gathered in windrows off the site. There are levelling and grader attachments for finally getting the site ready. They can be found as attachments to fit, two wheel and compact tractors and skidsters.



A working AFT45

### MAKING HOLES AND TRENCHES

Regardless of the distance, width, depth or diameter there is now equipment available to make the removal of the soil as easy as possible and fast.

For digging trenches there are both pedestrian operated and tractor mounted versions. A look at a trench such as the AFT45 gives a general idea of the capabilities of this type of machine. This particular trencher fits on a compact tractor of between 20hp and 45hp that has a creeper speed or hydrostatic transmission. Using digging chains the unit is capable of producing trenches from 12.5cm to 20cm wide and 1.2metres deep. Special laser grading linkage with solenoid depth control is an option. This is used in conjunction with lasers to achieve precision drainage grading.

By fitting a large diameter soil slitting wheel the machine then produces very narrow trenches measuring from 4cm to 10cm wide and 45cm deep. The removed soil is guided onto a hydraulically driven system to an elevated conveyor. This illustrates the abilities of one machine; there are a number of others on the market, including much larger models, which use similar principles for digging soil out.





JCB Micro Auger

#### EARTH AUGERS

Renewing fencing or planting trees then an earth auger is the tool. Again there are a plenty of choices from one or two men operated ones, to larger tractor driven units, or as attachments for another piece of machinery. They usually have a selection of different diameters and depths. Some companies offer ones especially designed for tree planting, but the standard ones are also okay, as long as you make sure the bottom of the hole is broken up, to allow the roots to penetrate.

## If I had a Hammer...

#### DITCHES AND RIVERBANKS

Although it does not come completely in the category of construction, the banks of ditches and streams may need some attention before the winter downpours. Brushcutters or clearing saws are ideal for removing vegetation and saplings, especially where access is restricted. On more open areas a flail unit, on an extended arm, will handle most conditions provided the bank is stable enough to take the weight of the tractor and attachment. If silting up has occurred in a ditch or stream, then a tractor with backhoe and ditching bucket is the answer.

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### TREE WORK

This is also a good time of the year to carry out tree work. If there is anything extensive required, it may be necessary to use a qualified tree surgeon or arboriculturist.

For lighter pruning jobs, removal of dead branches or unwanted overhangs a pole pruner fits the bill. The benefit of this type of machine is that it requires only one operator because their feet remain firmly on the ground. Where ladders are involved, for safety, two or more people are required. Pole pruners are usually extendable up to about 2.8metres.

Some companies offer them as part of a package that also includes a power unit plus interchangeable extended hedgetrimmer, power broom and brushcutter.

### COMPOSTING AND SHREDDERS

Autumn is an ideal time to consider constructing a composting area, especially on courses which have large amounts of leaves to deal with. As part of this type of system, a commercial shredder will be required to ensure that decomposing is accelerated. In these machines the collected material passes through a drum which has a series of hammers or flails. These not only chop the debris up, they also open the fibres to allow the essential organisms access to carry out the work.

Most shredders have a facility for dealing with small branches and light brushwood, converting them into chips for use on walk ways through wooded areas. If plenty of woody material is used some grass cuttings can

also be added. The compost produced is ideal as a mulch and soil conditioner for the shrubberies or ornamental flowerbeds or areas round a clubhouse or hotel complex. When deciding on the size of shredder to purchase the likely amount of organic matter that will be processed over a 12 month period is an important factor to take into consideration.

### TIPPING

There is a good chance that large amounts of materials, such as bunker sand will need to be move around the course. Tipping this can be a lot easier with a three-way tipping trailer. These allow you to pull up to the side of a bunker and unload the sand, hydraulically, off the side rather than out the back, it can help to cut spreading time.

### BUY OR HIRE

In an ideal situation it would be an advantage to have many of the machines mentioned in ones fleet, but in some cases it would be difficult in justifying the expenditure for items which are generally not going to be used on a regular basis. In this situation then hiring is the answer and there are plenty of companies nationwide who specialise in the hire of plant machinery and ground care equipment.

Whatever the construction, refurbishing or renewal scheduled programme is this autumn, the key to make life as easy as possible is to having the right machines to carry out the work. There is no shortage of them out there.



Blec Stone Raker



JCB Micro excavator