

Rough mowing to a high standard

James de Havilland presents the rough guide to rough mowers

*John Deere 8800
TerrainCut mowers
feature five cutting
units for a total mowing
width of 2.23m. Height
of cut adjusts between
a nominal 2.5cm to
10cm*



Rough mowers have evolved to the point where modern rotary models offer good contour following and an excellent finish. In some cases, a wide area model can be drafted in at certain times to mow a fairway too. So what should you look for?

As is so often the case, it is dangerous to generalise. However, it is fair to say a large proportion of golf courses will mow roughs with a rotary mower. Versatile, robust and able to operate with minimal maintenance, a rotary mower can combine a good finish with moderate operating costs.

The trick when looking at a new model is to consider exactly what you want the mower to achieve. A lot will depend upon the way in which the fairways are bounded by the roughs and how your mowing passes are set up to optimise productivity.

Is your priority to have a model to mow around bunkers without the risk of damage or do you need the ability to cover a wide area?

It of course follows that a wide area cylinder mower can cut the roughs; some courses will have moved from a 'heavy fairway' model to a lighter design and relegate the 'old' fairway model to taking care



John Deere 7400 mowers work at a variable width of 1.73m to 1.88m. The front units can be swung out when mowing next to a bunker to help prevent the mower's wheels damaging the edges. Each of the three units is 68.6cm in width



Each measuring 53.3cm, the rear discharge cutting units fitted to the John Deere 8400 feature anti-scalp front- and full width rear-rolls to leave a striped finish. Designed to follow undulations, the units are 'narrower' than those of the JD 7400.

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Jacobsen offer a range of mowers suitable for cutting roughs, the 2.30m five-gang AR-522 featuring 56cm Trim Tek decks that will mow down to between 1.9cm to 13.3cm. At the other extreme, the company's HR-9016T offers a 4.90m mowing width, will cut down to 2.5cm and offers the potential to cover around 6.7 ha – or 16.5 acres- an hour.



of the roughs. But where a rotary mower is the key choice, there are a few pointers that can help when trying to select the right model.

- Total area to be mown: Not always as simple as it seems. A 'new' mower may end up being employed differently once it is in service.

The key is to establish primary mowing duties and the area it will need to cut. Remember, theoretical mower performance is based upon a clear run. Halve these rates to get an idea of true performance.

- Terrain: Undulating ground and slopes may influence choosing between smaller individual cutting units and wider multi-blade decks.

On sloping ground, all-wheel drive may provide improved traction but it is overall stability that will be of primary importance.

A wide track mower may be a good choice but will it suit all the work required?

- Finish: Modern multiple 'gang' rotary mowers have improved contour following, individual cutting unit sizes varying between makes and models.

Smaller units will tend to suit undulating ground but a lot will also depend upon height of cut. How rough are your roughs?

- Height of cut: A rough mower that can be used as part of a fairway mowing regime may be very useful at certain times of the year.

Can the mower be used to help reduce grass height following a prolonged period of heavy spring / summer rain?

How important is height of cut and finish? Do you need a mower that can deliver a really fine cut or will a more conventional wide area rotary be more in line with your demands?

- Variable width: The ability to push out the outer units of a mower to increase mowing width goes beyond helping increase productivity over wide, flat areas. It can also be used to push the units out around bunkers or tuck more easily under bushes and hedges.

As with all mowing equipment, the key is to try different models and work out how the mower integrates with existing equipment.

Modern rotary mowers can achieve an excellent finish, particularly when exploited on a 'little and often' regime in periods of fast grass growth.

But some rotary models will also enable you to tackle much heavier growth that can include light scrub. The best mower will always be the one that is right for your individual needs.



Toro Groundsmaster rotary models include the seven gang GM 4700D. Offering a 3.80m cut, the mower can be operated with the two outer units raised. As with other rival designs, the rear discharge units can be fitted with a mulch kit. Note wide track width for stability on slopes. US style 'bump cap' a good idea when mowing around trees.