



Suck it and see

Tractor powered vacuum, sweeper and flail mower/scarifying collectors cover a broad equipment base. Choosing the right machine to collect everything from leaves and litter through to clippings and even cores can be tricky. Here's James de Haviland with key advice

Although there are potentially a large number of tractor powered collectors to choose from, homing in upon what you actually want the machine to do makes selecting the right tool for the job easier.

Some models are designed more for hard surface work and do not have the necessary clearances within the machine to cope with large bulky materials such as leaves and grass clippings. Others have a hopper capacity that is suited more to dense 'road' type sweepings than bulky organic matter.

Firstly a bit of a shortcut taking in the main machine types. These fall into two basic types - vacuum with or without a powered brush or flail systems and units with just

brushes or flails. The most popular self-contained vacuum collectors include the Trilo models from the Grass Group. For golf courses, the company's Trilo S4 now ranks as the top seller. At the heart of the S4 is the 850mm diameter turbine that provides the suction. It is designed to have enough power to draw even heavy debris into the 4m³ hopper. The main suction head has a working width of 1.80m and is complimented by a 5.0m long 250mm diameter wonder hose. Designed for use behind mid-range compact tractors of 45hp plus, the Trilo S4 will tip into trailers or skips 2.15m from the ground. Those seeking a model that can be fitted with an integral scarifier or flail head can choose the Trilo SG400.

When considering the purchase of this type of model, it is important to match the machine to its intended application.

For the most part, vacuum suction alone is perfectly adequate to collect grass clippings and leaves but you may want to consider a model that can be used to also carry out scarifying work or have a powered brush.

Moving on to tractor powered sweeper/flail collectors, there are a several makes and models to choose from, but they are sometimes hard to identify due to the emphasis that can be placed upon what they do. A good example is the Redexim Charterhouse Turf Tidy models.

These versatile machines are



LEFT: The Trilo S4 self-contained vacuum collector from the Grass Group features a 850mm diameter turbine that provides the suction. It is designed to have enough power to draw even heavy debris into the 4m³ hopper. The main suction head has a working width of 1.80m and is complimented by a 5.0m long 250mm diameter wonder hose.



BELOW: Redexim Charterhouse Turf Tidy machines are sold as a de-thatcher and scarifier that collects debris as it works, with less emphasis being placed on their abilities as a collector.

Offered with a choice of 1.50 or 1.80m working widths, the Turf Tidy 1310 and 1710 machines are supplied with multi-function scarifier heads with blades spaced at 18mm.

ABOVE: With its 4.5 m³ capacity, the latest Super 600 from Wiedenmann combines a flail mower, scarifier and sweeper in one unit. As with other similar design, the action of the flails creates a vacuum to allow the collection and shredding of bulk material such as leaves.

RIGHT: Fitted with a large diameter steel drum rotor with four rows of flails and two rows of draft paddles, the Wessex ProLine STC flail collector is designed to create suction for collecting the grass as it cuts or dealing with other debris, even in the wet. Offered in 1.2m and 1.8m working widths, the ProLine STC is semi-mounted to the tractor but runs on its own four wheels in work.



sold as a de-thatcher and scarifier that collects debris as it works, as opposed to emphasis being placed on their abilities as a collector. Offered with a choice of 1.50 or 1.80m working widths, the Turf Tidy 1310 and 1710 machines are supplied with multi-function scarifier heads with blades spaced at 18mm.

These can be user swapped for flails or a sweeper with four brush elements. Duties can include mowing, leaf collection or hard surface sweeping. Fitted with 2.50 and 3.00m³ high tip collector bodies, Turf Tidy units are designed for tractors of 25hp when just sweeping, 40hp being recommended for work with flails.

Another versatile machine is the

Wessex ProLine STC flail collector. Fitted with a large diameter steel drum rotor with four rows of flails and two rows of draft paddles, it is designed to create suction for collecting the grass as it cuts or dealing with other debris, even in the wet. Offered in 1.2m and 1.8m working widths, the ProLine STC is semi-mounted to the tractor but runs on its own four wheels in work. The front wheels are repositioned by a simple pin mechanism to adjust the working height. Applications will include cutting and collecting golf course roughs through to verticutting when the interchangeable knives are fitted. The same unit can also be used to run with just a brush rotor.

The Litamina HT from SISIS

come in 1.2m and 1.5m working widths and are offered with the choice of a screen hopper bottom, enabling sand or top dressings to fall back onto the swept surface whilst retaining debris such as leaves. This sort of unit is useful when brushing in top dressing materials but also taking out debris such as leaves.

Wiedenmann UK collectors include the Super 500 and Super 600. These have respective hopper capacities of 2.5m³ and a significant 4.5m³. Again, these units combine a flail mower, scarifier and sweeper in one unit. To help reduce ground pressure, the Super 600 runs on four 23x 10.5 pneumatic tyres. The hopper lifts via a parallel system so the hopper rotates to





The Imants RotoSweep from Campey Turfcare Systems is purpose designed to remove surface debris from fine turf, to include cores, grass clippings, leaves and general litter. The dual powered brush is claimed to cope with heavy debris and operate in less than ideal working conditions.

help improve emptying. As with other similar design, the action of the flails creates a vacuum to allow the collection and shredding of bulk material such as leaves.

The Super 600 attaches via a draw bar to tractors 50hp and above. Options include rear lights, a front roller to help reduce the chances of scalping, a dethatching and scarifying unit with verticut blades that can be spaced 19mm, 38mm and 57mm centres. Optional Durablades™ made of tungsten steel are also available.

Campey Turfcare Systems have started to see increased interest in its Imants RotoSweep. Designed to remove surface debris from fine turf, the machine can collect cores, grass clippings, leaves and general litter. The RotoSweep features a dual powered brush system that is designed to enable it to cope with heavy debris and allow operation in less than ideal working conditions. Tractor towed and PTO powered, the RotoSweep has a hydraulic tipping 2.5m³ hopper.

Amazon Groundkeeper models include semi-mounted variants suitable for use behind compact tractors of 20 through to around 35hp. Offered in working widths of 1.20m, 1.30m and 1.50m, the machines have a flail rotor that can be fitted with a choice of blades to

mow, collect leaves or pick up litter and other debris. Scarifying blades can also be included. All variants have a 1.80m hopper dump height and have respective capacities of 1.25 m3, 1.40 m3 and 1.55 m3.

How do you choose?

The models detailed are not intended to provide a definitive list of what is available, but they do give an idea of not only what's on offer but also how the machines differ. Choosing the right machine is easier if you can set out clear priorities before buying. Different circumstances will impact upon performance too, word of mouth recommendations needing to be put into the context of individual machine usage.

A demonstration of the machines is well worth the effort. It's no good selecting a machine to clear under trees if it proves too tall. It is also worth looking at a blower to compliment this type of equipment, these units helping to 'windrow' debris for faster collection. Other points to consider are

- Weight
- Standard and available tyre sizes
- Versatility
- Material capacity
- Power requirements

- Physical size
- Discharge heights
- Available options
- Main duties

One final point. This is not a buyer's guide and does not list every sweeper collector on the market. Further, many rotary ride-on tractor mowers can be fitted with a vacuum collector that will also enable leaves to be cleared without investing in a different machine. You may also consider a mulching deck for this type of work. The key is to establish what you need to clear and collect, how the debris is subsequently handled and if you are looking to also work on hard surfaces. Understand what your priorities are and the right machine should choose itself.

The essential workings of the Amazone Groundkeeper is much the same between the various models, the inclusion of two rows of 'paddles' creating enough draft to lift and shift heavy and wet leaves. The flail rotor can accommodate a choice of flail and either 2 mm or 3mm thick scarifying blades. All the blade types simply slot into place without the need for tools.





A high tip hopper allows debris to be emptied directly into a skip, trailer or heap for composting. Units that collect with flails will lacerate incoming material, such as leaves, so helping to maximise hopper capacity. Vacuum and brush collectors can work on hard surfaces to include car parks. What do you need a machine to do?

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