

THE KEYNOTER

Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council, Inc.

WINTER MAINTENANCE FOR TURF EQUIPMENT

by R. William Marberger, Jr.

Now that summer is behind us and fall renovation completed, it would be wise to consider the abuse to which our equipment has been subjected this year in order that we might realistically approach its reconditioning. Above average rainfall, generally prevalent in the area this year, necessitated mowing at more frequent intervals with the end result that over-worked mowers and tractors will require considerable repairs. For the same reason, compaction and disease dictated above normal use of aerifiers, spikers and sprayers.

The following list of suggestions for winter maintenance, though cursory, does represent the items that certainly should be checked and serviced as condition dictates.

A. Gang Mowers

1. Steam clean and inspect reels and bed knives, sharpening or replacing as necessary.
2. Check reel and roller bearings or bushings and seals, adjusting or replacing as required.
3. Remove side plates, checking drive train gears, and making necessary adjustment or parts replacement.
4. Lubricate all parts in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

Unless mowers are relatively new, a complete tear-down and reconditioning is recommended to assure uninterrupted service during the season.

B. Tractors

1. Check engine compression and rebuild or tune up engine in accordance with condition.
2. Drain and change all lubricants, changing all cleaners and filters. Lube all points.
3. Check clutch, brakes, steering and hydraulic system.

C. Rotary and Reel Mowers

1. Check compression, ignition and fuel systems and adjust or repair. Change motor oil, if 4 cycle engine, and service air cleaner. Winterize by placing tablespoon of oil in cylinder and cranking engine several times with plug removed.
2. Drain fuel system and lubricate completely.
3. Replace or sharpen rotary blades and balance.
4. Check reels and bed knives, sharpen or replace according to condition.

D. Sprayers

1. Clean thoroughly, check tank and plumbing for leaks, flush out and drain.
2. Check pump and repack, rebuild or replace as required. Drain completely!
3. If engine driven, follow procedure for small engine service.

E. Aerifiers

1. Service engine and check cranks, bearings and drive train. Replace tines or spoons.
2. Check tractor drawn aerifiers for bent or broken spoons. If majority are bad, replace entire set, keeping best of removed spoons for future replacement. You then keep spoons of equal size in the reel.

If this indicates a lot of work, remember that if you don't use the available time in the winter to do the job right, you'll have to **take** time in the season if a breakdown occurs.

Although this infers servicing the equipment yourself, the foregoing maintenance can be sent out to mower shops. These facilities, however, are already over-taxed and the return of your equipment in time can be a problem. Furthermore, you will find it more economical to perform your own grinding and servicing if the amount of equipment warrants the investment.

A parting shot relative to replacement parts. Ask your supplier for a recommended list of fast moving parts covering the equipment you operate and stock the suggested minimum. Then if you have an inopportune break-down, you will be equipped to make the necessary repairs. The investment will be small but the benefits great!

Start now and have your equipment ready, your fast moving parts in stock and you'll be ready to face any eventuality next year. Be a good turf manager — **"Be Prepared!"**



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