

BY KATIE MORRIS

Buying made easy

Online program simplifies a South Carolina superintendent's purchasing process

For most golf courses, handheld equipment is an afterthought compared to heavy-duty equipment such as mowers. But buying and repairing trimmers, edgers, blowers and chain saws can be just as involved as buying and repairing mowers.

For Mike Gregory, his days of anxiously waiting for parts have ended

Of a \$1.3-million maintenance budget, \$5,000 is spent annually on small tools such as blowers. Photo: Long Cove Club

thanks to Husqvarna's new Golf Solutions program. Gregory, turf equipment manager at the 18-hole Long Cove Club in Hilton Head Island, S.C., has been at Long Cove for the past four years. Previously, he was the equipment technician at the Club at Seabrook Island in Johns Island, S.C.

"When I arrived, the club was using Stihl equipment exclusively," Gregory says. "We started buying Husqvarna last year when it came out with a program targeted to golf courses."

In 2006, Husqvarna introduced Golf Solutions, a direct business model designed especially for golf facilities that allows superintendents and equipment managers to

purchase tools and parts online. The program allows Gregory to order replacement parts straight from the manufacturer. When purchasing Stihl equipment, he goes through a distributor to get replacement parts.

The turnaround time for receiving parts using Husqvarna's program is quicker than going through Stihl's distributor, in which Gregory had to wait three to four days before receiving parts, he says.

"Husqvarna will ship the parts one day ground or overnight if needed," he says.

Since Husqvarna introduced Golf Solutions, Gregory's inventory of handheld equipment includes:

- Two FS 85 string trimmers (Stihl);





The maintenance staff at the Long Cove Club uses blowers about 20 to 24 hours a week. Photo: Long Cove Club

- Five 326 LX string trimmers (Husqvarna);
- Two stick edgers (Stihl);
- Four BR420 blowers (Stihl);
- Three 356BT blowers (Husqvarna);
- One model 350 chain saw (Husqvarna);
- One model 029 chain saw (Stihl);
- One model 025 chain saw (Stihl); and
- One model 021 chain saw (Stihl).

Long Cove has a maintenance budget of \$1.3 million, \$5,000 of which is the annual budget for small tools such as trimmers, edgers, blowers and chain saws. Gregory says it's more cost effective to purchase handheld equipment instead of renting it because of the daily wear and tear on the tools.

"It was just cheaper for us to buy this type of equipment rather than rent it," he says.

Gregory's philosophy is to use the tools until they die or until it doesn't become cost effective to repair them.

"If you're repairing your equipment every week, then you're losing time and

money and should just purchase new equipment," he says.

Gregory uses the trimmers and blowers for about five years before they wear out. He helps extend the tools longevity by cleaning and oiling them, as well as changing air filters once a month. He saves time and money by doing all the repairs himself. The only time he needs assistance from the manufacturer is when he needs a replacement part. There also have been times when Gregory has called for technical support while replacing parts. The Husqvarna technician he deals with is available anytime Gregory needs him.

The affects handheld equipment have on a course can be taken for granted. Without these tools, the course at Long Cove wouldn't look as neat and clean as it is. Gregory uses the trimmers along the cart paths and around bunkers; the edgers to trim around the asphalt cart paths; and the blowers to keep the tees, greens and everywhere else on the course clean. The staff uses the chain saws to trim trees and remove weather-damaged trees.

The staff uses the blowers about 20 to 24

hours a week, Gregory says. All the other tools, including the edgers, trimmers and chain saws, are used on an as-needed basis. When the edges around the cart paths, bunkers and tees start to look overgrown, the staff will make time to make them look neat and clean.

Despite the maintenance staff's work on the golf course, it doesn't handle the maintenance around the clubhouse. The groundskeeping staff does. It has its own separate equipment that includes:

- Five trimmers (Stihl);
- Two trimmers (Husqvarna);
- Three blowers (Stihl);
- Two blowers (Husqvarna);
- Six chain saws (Stihl); and
- Three chain saws (Husqvarna).

The groundskeeping staff uses its equipment around the clubhouse pruning bushes and trees, edging around sidewalks, and trimming around lagoons.

Long Cove's entire maintenance staff – golf course and groundskeeping – consists of 27 workers including superintendent Ashley Davis and technicians. Of the 27 staffers, 20 are part of the golf course maintenance staff, which decreases to 13 during the winter.

It seems Gregory is a convert to Husqvarna's Golf Solutions. After being with Stihl for at least 10 years, Gregory says he's going to start purchasing more Husqvarna equipment.

"The pricing is cheaper with the new program, and the service and parts availability is quicker," he says. **GCI**

Editor's note: The inclusion or lack of inclusion of any manufacturer in this article doesn't mean the magazine endorses or favors any one product, program or company.

HANDHELD EQUIPMENT

BY KATIE MORRIS

Go with your gut

Iowa superintendent knows what to expect when purchasing tools

Mowers may cut most of the turfgrass on a golf course, but it's the little things handheld equipment maintains that helps keep a course looking pristine. Superintendents look for quality products from suppliers, and for Calvin Van Rees, when it comes to purchasing handheld equipment, he opts for products of which he's familiar.

"I've worked with Stihl enough to know what I'm getting, and I like the quality," he says.

When searching for tools, Rees, who is the superintendent at the 18-hole Westwood Golf Course in Newton, Iowa, looks for a small equipment dealership in town he can help. After researching equipment, Rees purchases the best product he can, so he went to one of the manufacturer's dealers.

"We don't want the biggest and the best, but we also don't want the cheapest," he says.

Rees, who has been at Westwood five and a half years and previously worked at Newton Country Club as assistant superintendent, wants equipment that can stand up to the rigors of the job. The tools are going to be tossed around and dropped, so he wants products that are durable and dependable.

"Stihl products separate a good job from a half-ass job," he says.

Rees' fleet of handheld equipment includes:

- Three FS 85 string trimmers (Stihl);
 - One edger (Redmax);
 - One blower (Redmax);
 - Two Farm Boss MS 290 chain saws (Stihl); and
 - One MS 280 chain saw (Stihl).
- The Redmax blower and edger were bought previous to Rees' arrival, but when it comes time to replace them, he plans to buy Stihl equipment.



At Westwood Golf Course, handheld equipment lasts awhile because it's not used daily. Photo: Stihl



At Westwood Golf Course, no more than \$1,500 is spent annually for handheld equipment such as trimmers, edgers, blowers and chain saws. Photo: Echo

“The blower isn’t ergonomically correct,” he says. “A person feels like their elbow is going to fall off after using it.”

Rees also knows that when he orders a replacement part the distributor will have it on hand or shipped to him in less than two days nine out of 10 times. Rees says he doesn’t know of a local Redmax distributor.

Rees’ annual maintenance budget is about \$335,000, and of this budget, he spends no more than \$1,500 for trimmers, edgers, blowers and chain saws. His annual maintenance budget is a combination of the operating and labor budgets. The labor budget includes the cost of

insurance for workers and golfers (who can be injured on the course), as well as workman’s compensation.

Rees says he would never rent handheld equipment because it’s much easier for him to send broken equipment to the on-site mechanic rather than send it back to the company from which he rented it. He doesn’t see the cost effectiveness of renting handheld equipment and or the cost effectiveness of repairing broken-down equipment continuously.

“We use the tools until we need to purchase new ones,” he says. “And sometimes, when there’s extra money in the budget, I use it to buy new equipment

before the money is used for something else.”

The handheld equipment lasts awhile because it’s not used daily. The oldest trimmer is 6 years old, the edger and blower are at least 10 years old, and the chain saws last an average of five years.

The Westwood crew use the trimmers and edger around bunkers, trees, ball washers, cart paths, water coolers and the clubhouse. The crew uses the blower on greens and tees and chain saws for tree removal and cutting weather-damaged branches.

The staff uses the edger twice a year, during the spring and fall – 25 hours a year at most. The crew uses the blower two and a half to four months out of the year on an average of 10 to 20 hours a week.

Even though the handheld equipment isn’t used every day, Rees and the crew still have to keep up on the maintenance. They clean equipment once a week, which includes scrapping off grass and checking engines and air filters.

Westwood’s full-time staff consists of six workers. During the season, (April 1 to Nov. 1) the staff fluctuates between nine and 13 workers.

Rees has been in the industry for 13 seasons and has been using Stihl products almost as long. He knows what kind of quality and service he’s going to get, so his purchasing philosophy is to stick with what he knows. **GCI**

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