

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.*