



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**

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.

Coco fiber drag mat

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- Gentle on all surfaces
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- Dissipates quickly in wet and dry weather
- Efficient use rates provide greater flexibility for the applicator to create a visual aid for optimal placement of pesticides and fertilizer

Becker Underwood

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Surfactant applicator

- Redesigned with a brass control valve for durability
- Precision spray nozzle is designed to put down a large volume of water with a wide, precise droplet-distribution pattern
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GreensKeeper gas-powered trailer

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Core Buster drag mat

- Interlocking 20-by-20-by 2-inch grid panels allow the user to choose the size
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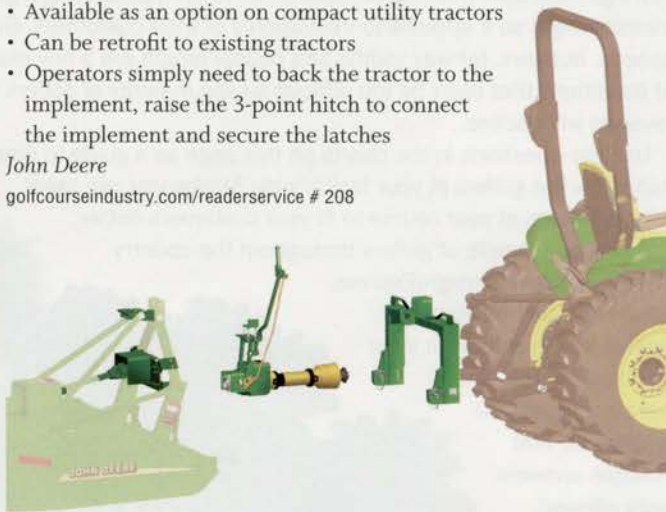
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iMatch Quick-Hitch

- Enables tractor users to hook up the PTO drive shaft of rear rotary cutters and tillers without leaving the operator's seat
- Available as an option on compact utility tractors
- Can be retrofit to existing tractors
- Operators simply need to back the tractor to the implement, raise the 3-point hitch to connect the implement and secure the latches

John Deere

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This year, *Golf Course Industry* is publishing feedback from golfers throughout the United States. We're conducting this research to establish a dialogue between the professional community and golfers. On this page, we'll report trends, likes/dislikes, suggestions and other information we gather through our face-to-face, Web-based and phone research.

How they play

At most golf facilities, golfers' abilities vary greatly, and those abilities are related to golf course conditions. Superintendents and others in management take this into consideration when maintaining a golf course, maintaining it so it appeals to the majority of their customers. Green speeds, bunkers, fairway widths and course length are a few examples of conditions that can't be too difficult for the majority of golfers or else revenue will decline.

Use the questions in the charts on this page as a guide to determine how the golfers at your facility play. Maybe you can tailor the conditions at your course to fit your customers better.

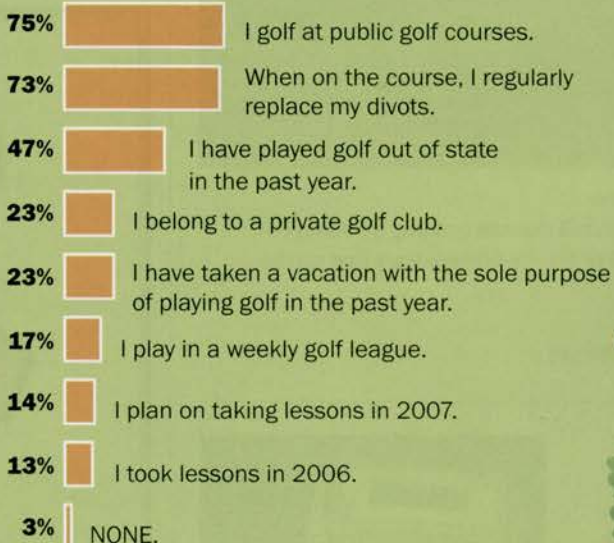
A random sample of golfers throughout the country were surveyed by InsightExpress, a market research company. Golfers surveyed play at least five times a year. There were a total of 200 responses, and multiple answers were allowed.

How many holes do you typically play when you golf?

I play 9 holes and 18 holes a relatively equal amount of time.



Which of the following apply to you and your golf game?



Typically, do you ride or walk when playing a round of golf?



Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG, is president of Golf Agronomy International. He's a 38-year AA life member of the GCSAA. He can be reached at terrybuchen@earthlink.net.



EQUIPMENT IDEAS

Mark it up

Joe Kennedy, CGCS, director of golf course maintenance at the Vanderbilt Legends Club in Nashville, Tenn., and Jon Frydenlund, equipment manager, built a removable Scorpion foam marker for the front of their John Deere 2155 tractor.

The bracket measures 18 inches deep by 24 inches wide and is made of mostly 1.5-inch, square metal tubing and 1.5-inch angle iron welded together. The bracket slides in via quick-disconnect lynch pins over the top of where the removable weight trays normally would be.

The 15- or 25-gallon tank is bolted to the metal tubular frame. The 12-volt electrical wire hook-up has a moisture-proof quick disconnect to the tractor with its own fuse and on/off switch.

The foamer marks a single drop point between the wheels. The operator is trained to determine the proper spacing when applying granular materials with the Vicon fertilizer spreader.

Agsouth manufactures the foam marker (model SC15-FM), which costs about \$400 for the 15-gallon model. The metal framework (some of which was in inventory already) and labor cost \$100.

When the foam marker isn't in use, the weight trays can be placed in their normal positions on the front of the tractor.



Travels With Terry

Globetrotting consulting agronomist Terry Buchen visits many golf courses annually with his digital camera in-hand. He will share helpful ideas relating to maintenance equipment from the golf course superintendents he visits – as well as a few ideas of his own – with timely photos and captions that explore the changing world of golf course management.



Goin' mobile

Oswaldo Cruz, director of golf course operations at the Palmas Del Mar Country Club in Humacao, Puerto Rico, conceived a way to recycle used divot-soil containers. He asked Henry Rodriguez, the club's irrigation technician, to bolt the four used Par Aide Divot Mate containers (model #425-02, hunter green) onto the back of his EZ-Go Workhorse irrigation technician cart. Rodriguez bolted the containers to the sides using one set of 0.5-inch diameter nuts, bolts, and flat and locking washers for each container.

The containers have a hinged top that keeps anything stored inside dry, which works nicely to store Rodriguez's irrigation parts and supplies. Each Divot Mate, which cost about \$48 when purchased new, holds four gallons of material.

The hardware and labor required to bolt the containers to the sides of the vehicle cost less than \$25. **GCI**



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Pat Jones is president of Flagstick LLC, a consulting firm that provides sales and marketing intelligence to green-industry businesses. He can be reached at psjhawk@cox.net or 440-478-4763.

HELLO! MCFLY!

I've always loved the original version of "Back to the Future." To this day, I want an antigravity skateboard and a DeLorean. Also, Christopher Lloyd, as Doc Brown, reminds me of half the turf professors I've ever met. Part mad scientist, part father figure.

Anyway, one of my favorite catchphrases from that flick is when Biff grabs Marty's dad and, in the process of rapping him repeatedly upside the head, yells: "Hello! McFly!" It's the ultimate cinema noogie.

Well, in that spirit, I'm giving the golf industry a noogie.

One of the unfortunate side effects of the economic challenges our industry faces is carpetbaggers descending on us. You know what a carpetbagger is, right? Originally, they were the unscrupulous Yankees who came to the post-Civil War South to take financial advantage of the carnage the war left behind.

In our case, the golf industry's carpetbaggers are companies trying to sell you stuff cheaper without investing a penny in you and your profession. "Hey, you might never have heard of me before, but you can buy products just like the ones you already use and trust, and you can save money," they say.

You know the usual suspects. I'm sure you've answered the phone before and found yourself entangled with one of those telemarketers selling trash bags, uniforms, biodegradable oils, florescent bulbs, "organic" fertilizers and a whole gamut of other junk. It's easy to hang up on these clowns, but these days, the range of crap these folks are offering is being expanded to include some products that claim to replace key resources for superintendents.

Let's call a spade a spade and just say I'm referring to fly-by-night companies selling knock-off pesticide products. I'm not talking about branded, well-supported, postpatent products offered by legitimate companies and distributors you know already. This isn't about proprietary versus

postpatent. That choice is one you have to make based on research, agronomics and relationships, even though there's much to be said for buying from the company that brought the product to market originally.

Instead, I'm talking about supergeneric stuff that comes in from off-shore (China, Israel, etc.) and is sold essentially off the backs of trucks. During the past year, several major foreign generic chemical companies have hired sales reps who are working our industry like the door-to-door salesmen of old. The market is being flooded by companies you've never heard of with no-name products that are "just like" brand names you've used for years.

... carpetbaggers are companies trying to sell you stuff cheaper without investing a penny in you and your profession.

The good news, if you call it that, is that the Wal-Mart-style pricing these folks are offering is driving down pricing across the board for "commodity" products like chlorothalonil and glyphosate. You can probably get the best deal you've ever had for some of those basic chemicals right now. Unfortunately, that's also the bad news. Companies that have supported and invested in our industry for years are being undercut by newbies who are only on the scene to make a quick buck.

The companies – proprietary and postpatent – that reinvest in our business and your profession are getting slammed by the carpetbaggers, and, quite simply, they can't be expected to take it forever. Nor can they be expected to invest even more to bring new products to the market, conduct research to help you use products better, hire first-class sales reps or sponsor the

numerous educational and social opportunities we've all come to enjoy.

Let's be clear: Good companies won't continue to value this market unless you value them.

I would love to provide a list of the good guys and bad guys in print, but the nice lawyers at *Golf Course Industry* would probably be very unhappy with me. Instead, let me offer a quick quiz to help you sort things out as you plan your purchasing for 2008:

1. Does the company have a name you know and trust? (+10 points)
2. You've never heard of the company, and you couldn't spell their name if you tried. (-10 points)
3. Is their sales rep someone you've known for years who has demonstrated good agronomic knowledge and who has served you and your friends well even when he wasn't trying to sell you something? (+10 points)
4. The sales rep is a guy whose last job involved selling ink-jet cartridges ... and he wasn't particularly good at that. (-10 points)
5. Does the company support your educational needs by sponsoring events, participating in your chapter and advertising in industry journals? (+10 points)
6. Is the company's idea of industry support bringing along some donuts for an unscheduled call by their salesman? (-10 points)
7. Does the company work with a solid local distributor that has a reputation for honesty and quality? (+10 points)
8. The company claims they "don't need no stinkin' distributor" taking a cut so they can give you lower pricing? (-10 points)
9. You're almost always willing to try new products and services from the company because it has a good track record. (+10 points)
10. You have to gulp real hard when it occurs to you you're risking your greens – and your job – to save a few hundred bucks on a case or palette of product. (-10 points).

If you have anything less than 50 points for the quiz, I have two words for you: Hello! McFly! **GCI**

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