

If I Only Had a ...

As a bevy of new products hits the market, we asked the age-old question: What do superintendents *really* want?

BY LARRY AYLWARD, MANAGING EDITOR

Just before Christmas, we asked golf course superintendents what visions they had dancing around their heads for new equipment ideas to help make their working lives easier.

While most superintendents we talked to are satisfied with the equipment and products available, some have wish lists for items that they need to help them with long-standing and irksome problems.

On a recent unseasonably warm and calm December day in the Great White North, superintendent Gordon Witteveen thought it was the perfect time to fertilize the fairways comprising the Board of Trade CC in Woodbridge, Ontario. "But the fertilizer wasn't going on worth a damn," Witteveen grumbled. "I had nothing but trouble."

Witteveen blamed his bad day on his fertilizer spreader. He wishes, he says, that he owned an efficient-operating spreader — specifically a computerized machine to control the flow and pattern of granular fertilizer.

Mark Conner, superintendent of the South Course at Firestone CC in Akron, Ohio, says he wishes he owned a walk-behind mower that could cut efficiently

around hard-to-reach spots, including steep banks and around bunkers. Conner also wishes for a longer-lasting fertilizer. He's not complaining about the brand he uses, which spurs grass growth for two to four weeks, but he prefers a fertilizer that could stimulate six weeks of growth, he says.

Bob Friend, CGCS, of the Colonial GC in Williamsburg, Va., says he wishes he had a heavy-duty thatching machine with more power to thatch greens progressively. He says he's aware of an Australian machine that can do the job, but not one that's available in the United States.

Keith Snyder, CGCS, of Great Bear G & CC in East Stroudsburg, Pa., says he's impressed with most of the products available to make his job easier. But Snyder says he can't afford some equipment, such as high-tech sprayers that are injected with chemicals to make them easier and safer to operate. Snyder's wish is that prices would decline on such equipment, but he's not hopeful.

"The golf course market is a small market with a small group of companies making equipment," Snyder says. "Prices don't come down in niche markets, and manufacturers can get what they want."

Friend also can't afford some equipment, but he has learned to invent his own contraptions, such as a device to blow air through greens. He recently welded a pipe to a blower and attached the gizmo to a four-inch drain tile connecting to the greens. He says he saved thousands of dollars that it would have cost him to purchase a vacuum pump to do the job.

A bigger problem than the cost of equipment is manpower, Snyder maintains. "I have reliable equipment, but I don't have the bodies to operate it."

Ken Noble, superintendent of Naples, Fla.-based Marco Shores CC, says his staff is also short-handed. Noble wants a robot-like mower that can be programmed to cut greens without a human guide.

"But then we would need a high-tech person to fix it," he adds. ■

Here are a few new items released late in '98 and early '99 that may help superintendents solve some of their woes:

Mowers



▲ The John Deere 2500 Tri-Plex Greens

Mower's cut quality is enhanced by a cutting unit suspension that carries the weight of the lift arms on the traction unit and not on the cutting units, according to the company. The 22-inch cutting units come with 11-blade reels, 3-millimeter standard bedknives and a smooth front roller. An offset-cutting unit design provides a reduced wear traffic pattern on the cut area and permits a clear view of the cutting.

John Deere also introduces the 180A Walk-Behind Greens Mower, designed with a narrower width to better handle severe undulations and contours on difficult-to-groom greens. The mower features an 11-blade reel. An external differential drive splits power to both traction rolls to provide straight tracking and easy turning, according to the company.



▲ The Eastman

HoverMower has no wheels and operates on a cushion of air. It can mow in any direction while following the contour of the land, according to the company. The mower can handle hard-to-reach slopes, steep banks, sand traps, retaining walls and awkward angles, Eastman says. The mower will hover over water while cutting soggy turf.



▲ **Textron Turf Care And Specialty Products** offers the Turfcat 500 Series, a line of Jacobsen Turfcat out-front rotary mowers, which feature a variety of engine and cutting-deck choices for a range of grounds maintenance tasks. Three of the Turfcat 500 models feature the liquid-cooled Kubota diesel engine. A fourth model is powered by a Briggs & Stratton gas engine.

Each mower features a 12-gallon fuel tank, and an adjustable pedal stop for setting a consistent transport/mowing speed.

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Medalist American Turfgrass Seed offers Bluemoon Kentucky Bluegrass, the darkest of any Kentucky bluegrass with a rich green-leaf color. It features a fairway performance down to half-inch heights, according to the company.

Medalist also has

Seed

available Caddieshack Perennial Ryegrass, which is resistant to many diseases, the company says. It has a dark green color and is adaptable in the North and South.

The Jacklin Seed Co. offers Arabia Turf-Type Tall Fescue, which is endophyte enhanced and features top-net blotch resistance. It has a dark green color and can be planted in full sun or moderate shade, according to the company.

Jacklin also has available TopGun Perennial Ryegrass, a high-density seed with a medium-dark green color and medium-fine texture. It features improved brown patch resistance, and has a good summer and fall density, according to the company.

Vehicles

► **UNI-CAR** offers the ACENTE, a single-rider vehicle with automotive styling. A forward center of gravity eliminates the lifting that most single rider vehicles experience when going uphill, according to the company, adding that the ACENTE also features a four-wheel independent suspension that allows for a comfortable ride.

► Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products

offers its new generation of Cushman Turf-Truckster turf work vehicles, designed to boost performance, durability and versatility, according to the company.

The four-wheel Cushman Turf-Truckster has a rated capacity up to 2,850 pounds, while the three-wheel model can carry up to 2,500 pounds of personnel and cargo. A longer, 60-inch bed gives the new model 30 percent more cargo space.

The Turf-Truckster 659 features a three-speed



automatic transmission. Other models have a four-speed transmission.

▼ **Club Car** introduces the Turf II XRT to its Carryall Line of transportation and utility vehicles. XRT is intended for "extremely rough terrain," including new golf course construction, grow-in and other non-golf rough terrain applications, the company says.

The gasoline-powered vehicle features heavy-

duty, all-terrain tires and a 6.4-inch ground clearance under the differential, according to the company. Other features include independent front suspension and four-wheel brakes.



Misc.

Smithco introduces the Spray Star 1000, a lightweight, maneuverable turf sprayer for use on tees, greens and other areas of fine turf. The sprayer offers either computerized or manual spray control systems. The machine is powered by a 25-horsepower gasoline engine with hydraulic drive to the rear wheels. It also has hydraulic systems for steering and braking.

◀ **Bluebird International** offers the HS-15, a portable hydro-seeder that can spread seed at 3,000 square feet an hour, according to the company. The HS-15 is fitting for small- to medium-sized projects. It can also be used in flowerbeds for quick and easy planting.

Spyker offers two broadcast mulch spreaders. The Model 296 is a 100-pound walk behind; the Model 297 is a 200-pound pull behind. The spreaders broadcast seed, fertilizer and pelleted products.

Otterbine Barebo offers a new version of Bunker Pumper, which features a six horsepower engine and a triple-protection, grease-filled

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Irrigation

► **Rain Bird's** line of decoders is designed to offer reliable, cost-effective in-field irrigation control, according to the company. The decoders are compatible with Rain Bird Windows-based central control systems and can operate from one to six valves. Model FD-210 controls one or two valves while model FD-410 can run up to two valves. Model FD-610 can operate up to six valves.

Other than a two-wire



hookup, the decoders don't require additional power lines. The two-wire communication provides real-time feedback of field operation to the central control system, the company says.

The Toro Co. introduces the 220 and 210 Series brass valves with an operating pressure of 220 PSI. The new EZReg pressure regulating module fits to the 220 Series valves and regulates down to flows as low as 5 gallons a minute, according to the company.

Toro also offers a series of Maxijet micro sprays designed to transform Toro 570 systems into low-volume irrigation systems. The flush-mounted micro-spray nozzle adapters with pressure compensating screens provide uniform water applications over elevation changes, according to the company. They will fit any Toro 570 Series body, shrub adapter, riser or extender and sit flush with the top surface of the sprinkler, protecting the nozzle from dirt and debris.

Rogers Innovative Inc. offers its WF4500, a 15-foot windfoil boom with electric fold system. It can spray in the wind with virtually no drift for public comfort and reduced liability risk, according to the company.

Fertilizer

The Scotts Co. reintroduced its line of professional methylene urea fertilizers, previously known as the Contec line. Three controlled-release fertilizer brands offer consistent nutrition release with flexible application rates for various uses, the company says.

The three brands include:

- Contec, which offers a high-quality source of controlled-release nitrogen, according to the company. The small, uniform particle size of Contec disperses evenly at the shortest greens heights.
- High Performance products offer a selection which produces green-up in soil conditions. The slightly larger particles sizing provides multiple uses for greens, tees and fairways, the company says.
- Complete Course products are good nutrient solutions for turf areas because of their initial quick response, combined with moderate, controlled-release characteristics, according to the company.

Growth Products offers Starter Plus 8-32-5 with 50 percent slow release nitrogen, a high phosphorus solution ideal for newly seeded areas and other high phosphorus applications, according to the company. Growth Products also offers All Season K (8-4-24) with 50 percent slow release nitrogen and .25 percent iron, which is formulated for year-round fertilization and provides high potassium to nitrogen ratio for problem turf areas which require more potassium.

Lebanon Turf Products will introduce composite granulation fertilizers and combination products in June under the Country Club, IsoTek and NX-Pro brands. The fertilizers have higher nitrogen activity index, particle dispersion and granule integrity, according to the company. More than 90 percent of the nitrogen is released into the turf within eight to 12 weeks.

The company says it measured the Performance Index Number (the scientific measurement of composite technology) of the fertilizers to prove their effectiveness.

Lesco Inc. introduces Flight Control, a bird-repellant technology designed to repel 14 species of birds, including Canadian geese, pigeons and seagulls.

The **Zip Abrasive Co.** reintroduces its Reel Sharpening/Back-Lapping Compound for metal finishing applications, including reel-mower sharpening. The product features a water-based carrier.

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seal that prevents water and debris from coming into contact with the engine components. The pumper includes a wear-resistant propeller.

Par Aide Products Co. introduces a hole cutter handle with built-in bubble level to help workers dig straight cups to ensure straight flags.