

# Give Him Wheels, But ...

MANY GROUNDS superintendents have proven in the past few years that it paid to put each man, and his tools, onto his own set of wheels for even the simplest jobs. Among two dozen superintendents interviewed at parks, campuses, cemeteries and golf courses there was general agreement that it increased a man's production about 40%. No longer did men waste time trudging across vast lawns, nor sit idle waiting to be dropped off or picked up by still another man in a \$4,000 pickup truck. The 40% translated into much-needed labor savings.

The machines that made it possible for every workman to have his own vehicle were the inexpensive three-wheeled utility carts. There wasn't a single superintendent we interviewed two years ago who had one who didn't intend to buy more of them. Then, you could get one for as little as \$400. It lasted four or five years, with an engine life of two or three; and you could get a new engine for \$70 and install it yourself in a half hour.

But now, as with so many products, prices have shot up due to skyrocketing material costs and shortages, labor costs, slow payment on sales, general inflation and more sophisticated cart design. As a result, some three-wheelers now cost as much as some pickups did a few years ago. And not only have buying costs jumped, but so have maintenance costs since some of these vehicles are relatively sophisticated machinery; \$10 per hour servicing and repair charges are not unusual for them.

Here's how Al Dennis, grounds superintendent at the Mt. Sinai Mortuary in Los Angeles describes it: "At Mt. Sinai there simply is no dropping off or picking up of workmen by others. Everyone here needs a set of wheels.

"We always did have three-wheelers, but their costs went up so much lately we turned more to four-wheelers, especially to compact pick-ups, which have their advantages. But that wasn't the whole

Rising vehicle costs cancel labor savings unless your vehicle is tailored to the job. Pinpointing the true annual cost is a more realistic approach to utility cart use.

answer. We realized we still were using equipment that was too expensive for one-man jobs requiring only light tools — that we had to get back to the low-cost three wheelers for these jobs.

"The large three and four wheelers are as valuable as ever, but such equipment is not needed for every job. The low-cost carts fill in where it's really impractical to use the others.

"We looked around and found one make that costs about \$900, instead of \$1400 to \$2000. This manufacturer is the first to go back to the old low-cost types. My guess is there'll be more.

"We bought two and are happy with them. They use a simple home-lawnmower type of engine with six horsepower. The lifespan may be half that of a \$2000 machine, but then it costs less than half as much to buy and service, and engine replacement is much cheaper. I figure a three year period before overhauling a bigger vehicle, and only two years with this low cost cart; but it has an engine you can afford to throw away and replace with a new one.

"Not only that, but a truck can't leave the streets; the man has to walk to his work area from the truck after driving to the vicinity. That's where our Jobmaster has an edge. It can go where others cannot go . . . and it doesn't leave tire marks, either. We use them to place vases, for flower pick-up, repairing and enclosing spaces (graves), general cleaning and light work. They carry rakes, shovels, hose and other things. They can't carry soil — we need a skiploader for that. And while a cart is barely large enough for a greensmower, it's too small to carry the grass, too. I wish the bed were about a foot longer each way."

"They have other limitations, too. Like any three-wheeler, you have to handle them carefully on

slopes when the turf is wet."

George Quiello, grounds superintendent at St. Joseph's Cemetery in San Pablo, California says the new low cost utility carts "have been very handy for us."

Often, he claims, they replace a pick-up truck. Without his \$900 cart he'd be tying up a \$3000 to \$4000 piece of equipment "and you could buy many of these Jobmasters for that!"

Besides the uses cited by Al Dennis, Quiello uses his to move hose and sprinklers, and sometimes carries a shovel and sack of concrete to set stones.

He has had no problems with hills or with lack of traction. But a muffler connection vibrated loose and a centrifugal clutch went out once.

The vehicle's ease of maintenance and low cost engine replacement were important in his decision to buy.

Wilford Cordova, grounds superintendent at Oakmont Country Club in Glendale, California, bought two low-cost three wheelers because the little carts do not damage the turf like a pick-up. He uses them almost entirely for watering and for odd jobs.

He welded two adapters onto the sides of each bed so that he can pull hoses without having to load and unload them. One cart easily pulls two or three hoses which, of course, can't be done by one man physically.

Wilford feels that his three-wheel utility carts each save 30 to 40 percent of a man's time.

He bought his first cart almost two years ago. It was one of the original models and gave him drive train troubles. But after spending \$100 it works fine. The newer model has given him no problems. "They're easy to keep going," he explains.

Although these carts are low in  
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There's a trend back to low-cost three-wheelers for some types of work. Here a groundsman at Oakmont Country Club in Glendale, California pulls a long hose from one job site to another.

### WHEELS (from page 22)

price they have some conveniences such as electric starter, automatic shift torque converter, disc brakes, high flotation tires and a 10 cubic foot bed. Optional are: reverse transmission, dump bed, larger tires, and lights. Also available are: an LP conversion model, extra seat and turn signals. Top speed is 18 miles per hour. The manufacturer is HMC, Inc. in Torrance, California.

Grounds bosses react with in-

terest to the life cycle value analysis technique now being applied in so much government buying. It pinpoints the true annual cost of a product by adding up the original cost, plus service and maintenance costs, and then dividing the total by the number of expected years of service. There was general agreement that the life cycle value of the new type of low-cost three-wheeler utility carts worked out about as follows: \$900 original cost divided into

5 years expected life of cart .....	\$180 per year
Oil and gas (heavy use) @ 60¢ per day for a 6-day week ...	180 per year
Engine replaced once (\$125 into 5 years) .	25 per year
Maintenance and service .....	70 per year
Complete cost per year for heavy use	\$455

A life cycle cost per year for the more expensive three wheelers, said users, would vary substantially according to the make of cart. There was general agreement that it would average just a few hundred dollars more than for the above low-cost carts. Over a five year period this adds up and warrants including some low-cost carts in a vehicle pool.

Larger savings, of course, come when any type of cart carries a man (and tools) who otherwise would walk or be chauffeured; then labor savings could well run over a thousand dollars per year per cart. □

### DRIFT (from page 16)

"When we are spraying along roadsides, we have wind movements created by traffic flow. A passing truck will create enough wind to knock over "men working" signs, or blow the hat off a man working along the side of a shoulder," says Crenshaw. "We would lose a lot of chemical from our target area because of this, and a drift inhibitor helps minimize this problem," he adds.

Crenshaw says his crews are getting a better kill on weeds with a drift inhibitor included with the sprays. "We are spraying the same amount of chemical, but we are doing a better job because we are getting more chemical on the target area," he explains.

"Another surprise we didn't expect is that we also seem to get a better kill with our herbicides after a rain with a drift additive included," says Crenshaw. "The herbicides tend to stick to the plants better."

Crenshaw said that if it would rain in the afternoon after his crews had been out spraying all morning, most of the work had been wasted. The chemicals would wash off the plants. "But since we have been using a drift additive, rain hasn't seemed to affect us any," he says.

The biggest value of adding something to control drift is the extra margin of safety, says Crenshaw. "You can put the chemicals where you want them in spite of winds when we normally wouldn't have been working."

"Before we began using Lo-Drift, we would not spray anything when the wind had reached six mph. But with the additive we can spray in winds of 10 to 12 mph," he explains.

Crenshaw says there were many spraying operations that they couldn't do because of drift. "We never sprayed along roadsides where there was a danger of harming a farmer's crop with chemical drift. Once this year we accidentally sprayed along a man's tomato patch with 2,4-5T where just the fumes from the product will kill tomatoes. But we had included a drift additive with the spray and we did not harm the tomatoes at all," he reported.

(Editor's Note: Amchem does not recommend spraying at high wind velocities.) □

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