

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor

## Turf haulers fight ATCs in West

California has been a tough market for U.S. turf vehicle makers with the importation of Dihatsu, Sanfu, and other Japanese small carriers. Now the battle has gotten worse with the knob-by-tired, three-wheel all-terrain cycles by Honda, Yamaha, and Suzuki.

The ATC market is based upon volume, whereas the U.S. turf vehicle market is a specialized, relatively low volume market. Placed side-by-side, price can easily sway a golf course superintendent from the tough, boxy, rough-riding turf vehicle to the sporty, quick, freedom of the three wheelers from overseas. Prices can be three times greater for the domestic product.

Meanwhile, Club Car, Columbia Car, and Yamaha are offering an in-between type of hauler, a golf car with improved suspension and small bed, priced in the \$3,000 range, or 30 percent more than ATCs.

Bottom line will be how long the ATCs last, what type of service buyers receive from ATC dealers, and what happens when the fun is replaced by the actual usefulness of the vehicles. In our November issue, we'll take a closer look at the ATC and the Green Industry.

## Panel points out service trend

A panel, formed by the American Association of Nurserymen to point out trends five to fifteen years in the future, has pointed to an increasing "service-based" economy, motivated by two-income families with less leisure time. The "Point" Committee mentioned interior landscaping specifically.

The AAN committee's projection may be less than five years away. Chem-Lawn, Davey, Sears, Stanley Steemer, and Rollins have already made steps toward multi-service business. Interior landscaping still lacks a national service company, a market which Davey is said to be researching. Look for Davey and perhaps a franchise or two to develop in interior landscaping in the next eighteen months.

## Mechanics can make or break you

Ray McMiken, president of B. Hayman Company, an equipment distributor in the Los Angeles area, often asks, "Who should be the second highest paid person on a golf course?" The answer is the mechanic who keeps the equipment productive.

When airlines negotiate with their mechanics, I listen closely before deciding which airline to fly. Parks, distributors, contractors; we all depend on equipment for our jobs. It makes tremendous sense to take advantage of every possible equipment training seminar by sending the head mechanic and perhaps part of his crew.

Equipment will be getting more advanced with hydraulics and solid state components. Manufacturers and distributors will be adding regional equipment maintenance and repair seminars as their equipment gets more complex. Don't miss these classes when they come to your area.

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