

more lawn equipment.

While the farm economy may be down, the general economy is stable which makes sales good overall. "The consumer is willing to spend money on big ticket items," says Simplicity's Covert.

Low interest rates particularly affect the housing market. "Every day there's more building permits given out, every day there's more lawns to be mowed," says Sam Smith, manager of lawn and garden equipment operations for Deutz-Allis Corp.

Steve Yolitz, manager of market planning for JI Case, says along with low interest rates, low oil prices benefit the industry. "Low oil prices, in general, are a plus because it impacts construction," says Yolitz. "A drop in oil prices also reduces operating costs."

The economy has an impact on the equipment industry from the outside, but changes within the landscape management industry also have a strong impact.

### The best opportunity

Toro's Brown calls the commercial landscape contractor "the fastest growing opportunity today for equipment."

Gary Erholm, president of Kem Enterprises and developer of the Rockhound grooming machine, is enjoying solid sales to landscape contractors throughout the country.

"We see more and more landscape contractors entering the scene with more than a wheel barrow and shovel background. I'm hearing a lot of favorable reports from contractors who have so much work they can't keep up," says Erholm, who also sells to golf course contractors and municipalities.

"We're seeing growth in the outdoor power equipment industry," says David Welfelt, marketing manager for Excel. "A lot of it is due to the professional landscape maintenance contractor. There's still a lot of professionalizing going on within the landscape maintenance industry. That goes hand-in-hand with equipment."

Such growth has heated up competition between companies in all types of equipment.

"This is a very competitive market," says Teresa Lowry, advertising manager of Gravelly. "When we entered it four years ago, there were maybe five manufacturers making commercial intermediate walk-behind mowers. This year at the Landscape Expo, there were something like 40. We do see the market growing."

Howard Price says the competition for manufacturing 72-inch mowers is especially intense since John Deere, Jacobsen, Toro, Excel, Ransomes, and Price all market similar models. **WT&T**



**Bob Bergen, Bolens president, sees good years in 1986 and 1987.**



**Lesco's Jeff Mack sees equipment growth for his company.**



**Jim Gourley of Lawn Masters "can't build plug aerators fast enough."**

## WT&T asks: 'How does the future look?'

**Dale Evenson, president, HMC/The Green Machine:** "In the two-cycle part of the industry, there will be some pretty good price increases coming up this summer and next year if the dollar remains the same. Most two-cycle equipment is imported."

**Jim Gourley, president, Lawn Masters:** "Tremendous. We can't build our plug aerators fast enough."

**Myrtle Feldmann, Feldmann Engineering:** "Very optimistic. We're always developing new products."

**Earl Crane, Earl Crane, Inc.:** "It's like I've said for 60 some years in this business...It's out there if you want to go get it."

**Jim Taylor, president, Heckendorn:** "It doesn't look like it's going to be gangbusters, but there'll be steady growth."

**Bob Martin, president, Exmark:** "Sales are ahead of last year and merchandise is moving through earlier. We see the market continuing to grow for several reasons: commercial mowers are growing like commercial chemical application people, and the cost of a good quality homeowner mower is increasing."

**Bob Walker, president, Walker Mfg.:** "We're a niche product in turf care. We'll offer a larger horsepower machine in '87 with more features for the commercial market."

**Bob Bergen, president, Bolens:** "The outlook we see from our company's standpoint is very very positive for this year. There's good indication it will carry through to next year."

**John Kurtze, vice president sales, Al-Ko Kober:** "I see nothing but low inventories and an interest from all levels to increase inventories. I'm very positive about it."

**Mike Schaefer, vice president, F.D. Kees:** "The lawn equipment market is a growing market. The intermediate riding mower market is pretty tight. But I think it'll be like the trimmer market and thin out in the future."

**Jeff Mack, product manager, Lesco:** "We believe that today's customer is becoming cost conscious. They will not sacrifice quality to obtain this objective. This fits Lesco in that we market directly to the end user, thereby allowing us to provide excellent quality at a very competitive price. This strategy has positioned us for tremendous growth within the equipment industry."

**Kevin McGrath, Locke Mfg.:** "It looks positive. The people we're selling to now are much more educated and knowledgeable."

**Dal Neely, manager national commercial sales, Wheel Horse:** "The power equipment industry looks pretty good for a number of reasons. The economy has stabilized, interest rates are down, and the pricing structure is better."

**Steve Yolitz, manager market planning, JI Case:** "'85 was the best

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# MOWING FOR DOLLARS

The right mower for the right job can mean savings for your mowing operation.

by William C. Kinzer



Pull-behind reel gang mowers, like the Jacobsen 5/7 Ram-Lift Ranger with seven gangs, are the most economical mowers for large turf areas.

## THE EQUIPMENT REPORT

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year since '79 in terms of the industry. We look to '86 to be possibly matching '85 levels."

**Dave Taylor**, national marketing rep, Dedoes: "Fantastic! The aeration market has finally caught on...particularly in athletics and schools."

**Patricia Carroll**, advertising/public relations, Kubota: "Our product line is appropriate for the commercial turf market as well as the compact tractor market. Our success comes from both markets."

**Joe Nelson**, director marketing services, Sensation: "It's kind of cloudy, really. Generally, we feel it's stabilized, but it's a slow growth industry."

**Gordon Bannerman**, corporate secretary, G. Bannerman Ltd.: "I think it's ever-growing and expanding at a heck of a rate. There have been more changes in the past 10 years than the 10 years before that."

**Dwayne Plessinger**, service coordinator, Steiner Corp.: "It's never been better for us. We're in a unique situation since we don't directly compete with too many other companies. Innovation is the edge in this market."

**Marion Meredith**, advertising manager, FMC: "Good. Our sales have grown over the last year."

**Jim Jenkins**, sales manager, Snapper: "The future looks good. But, as a whole, industry experts say there'll be little growth."

**Lee Markgraf**, operations manager, Kawasaki: "Positive. Our numbers are increasing. People are willing to pay more to get quality."

**Nic Smokey**, advertising manager, Tecumseh: "They're forecasting a two to three percent growth this year. It's a good outlook for equipment."

**Stan Kinkead**, sales manager, National Mower: "We're trying to make functional, simple machines. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to build something simple."

**Dave Welfelt**, marketing manager, Excel: "Excel and company will continue to grow larger and smaller. We'll provide larger pieces in rotary mowing and continue to expand in the smaller end." □

A great deal of money can be saved on mowing costs by simply choosing the right equipment for the job and using that equipment in the most efficient and economical manner.

To achieve the most cost effective mowing, there are several factors to consider.

The initial cost of equipment appears to be the most obvious factor. But in long-term mowing budgets, it may be the least important due to labor costs, maintenance costs, downtime costs, and fuel costs over a given time frame.

Each machine must be evaluated in its application for what it can do for you.

### Types of mowers

Each of the basic mower types (reel, flail, rotary, sickle) has its advantages and limitations. A purchaser must know the type of turf he needs to cut, how often it needs cutting, and what each of these mower types can do for him.

Reel mowers give the finest quality of cut due to their shearing action. They also have the longest life.

Rotaries have the easiest maintenance, but because they are impact-type mowers, they produce a less formal finish to the turf and require a higher horsepower source.

The flails have safer operating characteristics, and some give a quality cut to semi-formal as well as informal turf. Flails are also impact-type mowers and require a high horsepower source.

Sickle mowers are effective for cutting tall rough grass such as along roadsides but they have limited applications and high maintenance requirements.

### Horsepower requirements

All mower types should be teamed up with properly sized horsepower



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