

LOADING: FOR LOADS OF PROFITABILITY

Selecting the wrong loader for the job means wasted time and labor. Selecting the right loader can assure your company more profitability. Here's how to go about the selection process.

Selecting the appropriate equipment is a vital decision for a landscape manager that can mean the difference between profit and loss. Several variables affect the purchasing decision, including:

- in what application or applications the equipment will be used;
- how frequently the equipment will be used; and
- the conditions under which the equipment will be used.

"Matching equipment to applications is key to helping ensure that a landscaping operation runs smoothly and profitably," says Marty Koval, product supervisor at JI Case.

"A landscape manager may be able to operate efficiently with one piece of equipment and a variety of attachments. Or, it may be more sensible to purchase two or more pieces of equipment with multiple functions and keep a busy operation running smoothly. For guidance in evaluating equipment needs, a knowledgeable dealer is an excellent resource."

Tractors

A general purpose tractor can easily handle many landscaping projects for municipalities, parks, golf courses and recreational areas. With the right attachments, these small, compact

machines provide the maneuverability and versatility for mowing, grading around buildings, site preparation and general clean-up.

For example, the Case Model 380B general purpose tractor comes equipped with a three-point hitch and PTO to easily accommodate a wide range of attachments. The three-point hitch provides the operator with a lift and lower function and a draft and float control to pull a variety of mowers, box scrapers, backfill, leveling and grading blades and rakes. A PTO enables the tractor to drive augers, rototillers and mowers.

Optional auxiliary hydraulics let an operator use up to two functions with attachments, such as pitch, tilt and raise and lower functions.

A low center of gravity (LCG) version of this tractor is specially designed with improved stability that may be needed for contoured golf courses, parks and roadside mowing.

The LCG tractor's wider stance, lower profile and high flotation tires provide better control on slopes, significantly reducing overhead clearance concerns and virtually eliminating the potential of any lawn damage.

Nurseries and contractors also often need tractors that can accommodate loaders and forks to move and load trees, shrubbery, stones or pallets of material such as sod.

Many general purpose tractors are available in industrial versions that use a stronger frame and axle to handle these heavier loads. They can also have a transmission with more travel speeds and shuttle capabilities between forward and reverse that provide faster cycle times.

"In different configurations and with a variety of attachments, general purpose tractors can function in a multitude of applications for landscape managers and contractors who aren't working the individual ma-





Loaders like this one can be easily removed from tractors in less than one minute. This quick-change feature makes the tractor more versatile and time-efficient.

chine year-round," Koval says. "However, if the equipment is going to consistently be used in heavy applications and for long periods of time, a more substantial tractor should be considered."

Landscaping tractors

Landscaping tractors provide contractors with the rugged performance capabilities and durability that will keep the machine operating for long periods of time in more adverse conditions. These products are designed with a single-piece mainframe and integral loader to provide the strength needed for more heavy-duty operations.

Common applications for these maneuverable tractors are in new residential and commercial complex construction where extensive amounts of loading, grading and planting are required. Popular in rental yards and with landscape contractors, these higher horsepower tractors feature a torque converter



Many times, backhoes are used not only for excavating, but also for loading the displaced dirt into trucks for transport elsewhere.

and shuttle to help maintain optimum performance of the synchronized transmission.

A three-point hitch can provide up to five hydraulic functions for more precise control of the many mower, rake, box scraper and broom attachments available.

Many of these tractors are also available with four-wheel-drive for a more productive loader operation, greater drawbar pull, better traction with attachments and more tractive effort on muddy or hilly terrain.

Skid-steer loaders

Skid-steer loaders are utility machines that can be a valuable asset working alone or in conjunction with a tractor or loader/landscaper.

Their small size and excellent maneuverability enable skid-steers to fit through narrow areas, operate in tight

spots and make tight turns. One company has a skid-steer loader that is only 35 inches wide, but has a 550-lb. lift capacity.

"Skid-steer loaders not only replace a man with a wheelbarrow, they also can accomplish the smaller landscaping jobs that tractors cannot handle," Koval notes.

In a nursery, a skid-steer loader can be driven down narrow rows to transport shrubs and small trees. In the back of the lot, it can move materials and has the reach to dump soil or gravel into small trucks.

On a landscaping project, these versatile machines can spread and contour topsoil, transport shrubs and small trees and move gravel and bark into place to finish a job.

A skid-steer loader with a smooth-bladed bucket may be used to build up planting areas. Because skid-steer loaders are designed to accommodate a variety of attachments, the operator can switch to an auger attachment to dig holes for bushes, small trees or even post holes for a split-rail fence.

Along with a variety of buckets, other skid-steer loader attachments include pallet forks for loading, tree spades, grader blades and backhoes.

"There are a variety of options landscape managers can employ when it comes to choosing equipment for their operations. Equipment rental is often a viable choice when a specialty application arises and an equipment purchase is not cost-effective. The key is to realistically evaluate needs to ensure that the equipment investment pays off by meeting current as well as future needs," Koval concludes.

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Skid-steer loaders maneuver well in small areas.