

NEW AND IMPROVED

With 1989 comes new and improved mid-size riding mowers. LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT takes a look at some of the innovations that landscape managers will see in their dealerships this spring.



Buntun's BR 61 is an 18 hp rider with an Onan engine.



The Pro Star now comes with a new, wider 60-inch deck.

As commercial/industrial acreage gets bigger, so do the commercial riding mowers responsible for keeping the grass neat. So says Mike Packer of the Buntun Co., one of the makers of this type of mower.

"I think what we're seeing is a step up in size of mowers," Packer tells LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT. "Guys using a 21-inch walk-behind are stepping up to 32-, 36-inch mowers. Those using 36-inch mowers are going up to 48 and 52."

This type of equipment is known in the industry as the mid-size rider.

"Why?" asks Packer. "Productivity. Companies that are stepping up into larger properties need the larger capacity machines, but something that's affordable. The nature of the business is that they make a lot of money, but never seem to have it (to spend on new equipment)."

Because the equipment is getting larger, it also pays to be more maneuverable to eliminate the need for trimming. That's the main reason why landscape managers are seeing more zero-turning radius mowers on the market.

Dixon, pioneer in the zero-turning radius field with its ZTR model, has lately been seeing more and more competition in this market.

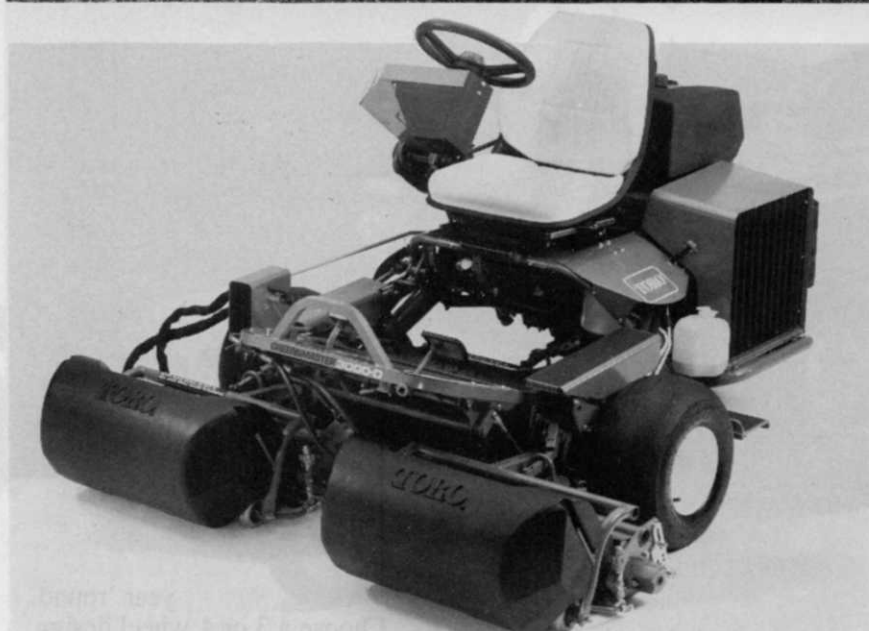
President Bob Foutch of Pro Star, which entered the zero-turning market in 1988, sees a big future. "Zero-turning radius mowers are the coming thing," he says. "They can do so many more things. And as we go along, I'm sure we'll continue to make improvements."

Joe McDonald, marketing coordinator for John Deere's commercial division, disagrees with the current zero-turning mindset. "We've looked at zero-turning radius mowers, but don't think the benefit is there," McDonald says. "They aren't as operator-friendly or safe. The major point to consider with a front mower is its ability to trim. Zero-turning mowers are fine if you're in the middle of a field."

It seems, too, that landscape managers are demanding more versatility from their mowers. Available attach-



Exmark's 3150 comes with a 54-inch deck.



Toro's Greensmaster 3000-D has a liquid-cooled diesel engine.



Cushman's new Core Destroyer attachment does exactly that.

ments are playing a larger role in buying decisions. Cushman, for example, has a new Core Destroyer attachment for its Front Line series. Kubota and Wheel Horse have added sweeper and snowblower attachments.

From the landscape manager's point of view, no matter what kind of equipment "Iron Country" (LM first coined the term, meaning equipment manufacturers, in 1984) turns out, there are other considerations in buying.

For instance, Russell Studebaker, new president of the Professional Grounds Management Society, says many landscapers consider their equipment budget, existing inventory and labor budget before buying. Studebaker, senior horticulturist for the City of Tulsa, Okla., integrates herbicides for trimming with his string trimmers and his Toro Groundsmaster mowers.

"Once we find something we like, we like to stick with it because of parts inventory," Studebaker tells LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT. "We want something that's well-built."

Engines make a big difference to Peter Scholz of Vidosh Brothers, Sterling Hts., Mich. "I prefer diesels. They're more durable. Our entire fleet is Ransomes diesels. We have some diesels mowers with 1000 hours of use and we haven't touched (repaired) them."

He says his Ransomes mowers are also maneuverable and easy to operate. "They are able to do the big jogs and at the same time get into the small areas," Scholz notes.

Mark Yahn of Ground Control Landscaping, Orlando, Fla., also pre-

MID-SIZE RIDING MOWERS—New for 1989

COMPANY	ROTARY/REEL	MODEL	COMMENTS
Brouwer	Reel		New triplex riding reel with 76-inch swath
Bunton	Rotary	BR 61	18 hp riding mower with Onan engine; rear-wheel steer, electric lift-cutter deck; 61-inch cut
Cushman	Rotary	Core Destroyer	New attachment to Front Line mowers; badknife hammer blades powder cores
John Deere	Rotary	Groundsmaster 200 series	(52-, 62-, 72-inch cut) has new liquid-cooled Mitsubishi gas engine to complement diesel (72-inch cut) with liquid-cooled gas or diesel engine has new four-wheel drive added
	Rotary	Groundsmaster 322-D	
Excel	Rotary	Hustler 640 Hillside	72-inch heavy dual-trim mower with closed look traction drive system Free-floating rear-discharge 51-inch mower with 3 V-belt-driven blades; up to 9 mph 320 has 3-cylinder engine, 340 has 4-cylinder engine; both have either 60-inch 3-way blades, 72-inch standard deck or 72-inch dual trim rotary attachments
	Rotary	Hustler 251 K	
	Rotary	Hustler 320, 340	
Grasshopper	Rotary	Model 411	35-inch commercial deck; 4 models ranging from 18 to 21 hp
Grazer	Rotary	EM 52	52-inch 3-pt. tow-behind with PTO drive available next summer Same as above, but with 62- or 72-inch swaths
	Rotary	EM 62, 72	
Howard Price	Rotary	Turf Blazer 727	Diesel-engined with 60- or 72-inch side or rear discharges New model that mows up to 3.8 acres/hr.
	Rotary	Sunstrand Model 15	
Kubota	Rotary	S2400	New sweeper and snow blower attachments New four-wheel steering; gas and diesel engines
	Rotary	G series	
Lesco	Rotary		New zero turning radius 52-inch rotary with unique dual articulating deck, rear bagger, 18 hp Kohler engine Same as above, 36-inch cut; available late 1989 Added dynamic braking, improved power steering; 60.75-inch cut
	Rotary		
	Reel	300 Greensmower	
Locke	Reel	Model 6C	New 70-inch triplex with pneumatic drive and 5 or 8 hp Honda engines 87-inch with hydrostatic drive has improved hydraulic cooling system and optional Honda engine 77-inch; same as above
	Reel	Model 1	
	Reel	Model 4	
Pro Star	Rotary	Model 620	New 60-inch ZTR deck
Scag	Rotary	12½ hp Hydro	Adds 12½ hp with 40- and 48-inch decks
Toro	Reel	Reelmaster 216	New three-wheel drive, now with 11 blades to go along with 5, 8; 72-inch cutting width New 44- or 52-inch with dual transmission steering for tight-circle steering without scuffing; three-blade decks New diesel power
	Reel	HMR	
	Reel	Greensmaster 3000-D	
Walker	Rotary	Model C	16 hp mower with built-in grass-catcher, 3,000-hr. life span
Wheel Horse	Rotary	Model 724 Z	New; following attachments: 60-inch side-discharge deck, 50-inch side discharge, 6 cu. ft. vacuum, 48 inch snow blade
Woods/Hesston	Rotary	Models 3150, 2650	Straight transaxle drive added, along with regular chain drive



Gas or diesel engines are available for Kubota's G series.

fers diesels because of more efficient fuel consumption and longer engine life. He approximates the diesels have five to six times the life of gas engines.

"We have some diesels we bought in 1983 that have yet to be given a major overhaul," he says. "Our average hour life on a 24 hp diesel is 5000 to 6000 hours."

Yahn also looks at overall speed, which is a combination of ground speed, maneuverability and acre per hour. "Because of the large amount of turf we need to cover in a week, speed and maneuverability must be combined with durability," he notes. "We look at deck strength quite a bit. The gauge of the metal has to be able to withstand constant sandblasting. The front of the deck functions as a bumper, so it must be strong, well reinforced."

Yahn also looks at caster wheel assemblies: "We always order our equipment with the heaviest type caster wheels they make, along with any optional items, like anti-scalp rollers, to get the deck to float in as many directions as possible to prevent scalping, but also to get the floating effect."

In overall construction, Ground Control likes a liquid, differential-type axle. "The Ransomes and Hustlers all have shaft drives; universal joints, shafts going down to the axle driving the wheel," notes Yahn.

Finally, comfort is very important. "Those guys sit on those machines for 45 to 60 hours each week," Yahn says. "If the machine isn't comfortable, you'll go through people left and right."

LM