

bang for my buck by doing it that way rather than getting it repaired at \$40 an hour."

Scholten says there is no substitute for scheduled upkeep on smaller motors and gives generally passing grades to equipment owners in the workaday world. "The real professional recognizes the value of a good maintenance program," he says.

Likewise, Molinatti gives passing marks to those maintaining smaller engines: "They do moderately well (but) maintenance never seems to be stressed." He also notes that in one sense, smaller engines

require more critical and timely maintenance than larger motors.

Consider, Molinatti asks, what is demanded of a typical commercial walk-behind: constant, daily use (four to five hours at 3600 rpm) under strenuous conditions. This makes routine maintenance mandatory and rebuilding or replacing perhaps inevitable.

Or consider the title of a monograph Scholten once authored: "Small Engines Can Last Forever—Almost."

—Jack Simonds

Save in spring: compost now

Now is the time for all good landscape managers to come to the aid of their country. Composting is a start.

■ October is the perfect month to gather leaves and other landscape debris for starting compost piles and wind-rows.

Yard waste composting is a practical idea for lawn care operators, landscapers and golf course superintendents. But the undertaking should be approached with planning both on paper and on site, according to an Ohio expert.

What can composting do?

1) It eases the strain on overburdened landfills while creating organic materials which can be used on the job.

2) It favorably affects the pocketbook by lowering tipping (disposal) fees and streamlining disposal methods.

3) It delivers rich, valuable humus in one to two years.

Rick Thomas, an Akron, Ohio, LCO who also works with the area's cooperative extension service, offers several suggestions toward setting up compost wind-rows this month. Keep in mind composting's basic formula: equal parts of organic material, air and moisture.

Thomas recommends:

• Mixing grass trimmings with other materials. A 30 percent grass to 70 percent other "bulking" items mix is ideal. Leaves, shredded prunings and other organic mat-

ter best combine with grass for healthy aerobic (air-based) decomposition.

Grass trimmings do not decompose well alone; the plant is 80 to 85 percent water. Grass mats onto itself and when slow anaerobic (little or no air) decomposition occurs, a putrid smell results. A tip: create a stockpile of bulk materials to mix with grass trimmings when needed.

• Checking with local and state envi-

ronmental authorities beforehand for composting setup rules. Ohio, for instance, has one set of prescribed regulations for commercial yard waste composting sites up to three acres and another for larger tracts. Controls are designed to prevent leaching into the water table and nearby water supplies. Some licensing may be needed in advance.

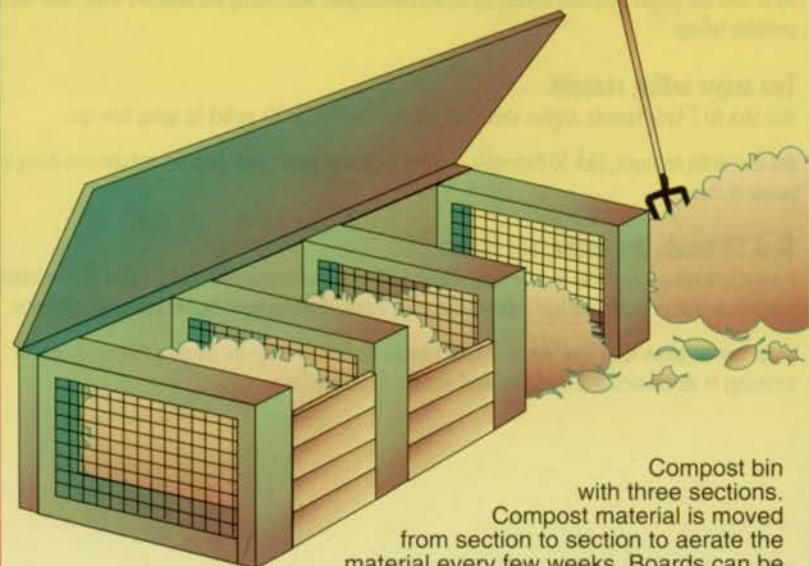
• Wind-rowing materials in long rows rather than composting in piles. Thomas says when piles exceed six feet, the weight of the materials tends to fall onto itself, depriving the core of needed air for proper decomposition.

A "manageable size," in his view, is a wind-rowed line no taller than six feet or wider than 14 feet. Thomas notes some operators may find it worth investing in compost-turning tractor attachment systems; although the expense is not necessary. Also possible is pooling with other landscapers to share both expenses (such as shredding) and end product.

• Considering switching to grass mulching at all times; a "don't-bag-it" philosophy which is being stressed in areas where he meets local governments. Thomas admits customers don't always understand or like mulching, but the idea can be put across if it is patiently explained.

—Jack Simonds

How to build a compost pile: NEXT PAGE



Compost bin with three sections. Compost material is moved from section to section to aerate the material every few weeks. Boards can be removed to gain easy access to each section.