

# What's new in mid-sized walk-behinds

**No other piece of equipment used in the green industry has as many standard and optional features.**

■ Do not let the appearance of the mid-sized walk-behind rotary mowers on the market fool you.

Most look pretty much the same. But outward appearance has nothing to do with the wide variety of standard and optional features the landscaper or superintendent should be inspecting before making a purchase.

For instance, according to Dane Scag of Scag Equipment, you should match the mower deck to the job size. If you're mowing mostly 1/4-acre properties, you should be using a 36-inch deck. If the properties are around 1/2 acre, you should be using a 52-inch deck. And if they're full-acre size, the deck should be at least 60 inches wide.

Here are more considerations:

● **More or less horsepower?** This is one of the main purchase considerations, according to Tony Lewicki Jr., a former landscaper now employed at ProCutters, a distributor in northern Ohio. It is most important to make sure the engine size matches its purpose.

For instance, if you're going to be cutting in wet conditions, you are going to need a more powerful engine. And if the mower deck mulches, it may need as much as 30 percent more power than a deck without mulching capabilities.



**Lewicki: match horsepower with purpose**

● **Belt or hydrostatic drive?** Belt drives are less expensive—by about \$1000, according to Lewicki. But they do need replacement on occasion. Hydrostatic drives, on the other hand, offer more efficient power in wet conditions, and many are guaranteed for the life of the mower.

"The difference between hydro and belt drive is like the difference between automatic transmissions and standard transmissions in automobiles," says George Hudson of Bearco Distributing, also in northern Ohio.

In addition, many manufacturers are now offering dual hydrostatic drive, with individual controls that allow true zero turning radius—which takes us to the next consideration:

● **Inside-wheel zero turning radius or true zero turning radius?** Inside-wheel zero turning radius machines lock one wheel while the mower turns on the other. The true zero turning radius machines feature independent wheel drives: one goes forward, the other in reverse, allowing the machine to pivot in one spot. But you'll usually pay more for true zero turning radius machines.

● **Electric or recoil start?** For a few dollars more, you can buy an electric start. But for a little more effort, you can opt to yank the cord and save the money.

● **Is it comfortable for the operator?** Controls and handlebars come in every configuration imaginable. Make sure that the people who will be using the mower feel comfortable with it before you buy.

● **Ease of maintenance?** Simple design usually means ease of maintenance. You should check the location of grease fittings and other areas—belts, wheels, spindle assemblies, filters—that will be routinely maintained, to make sure they are readily accessible.



**Hudson: hydro like automatic transmission**

## APPROXIMATE GRASS CUTTING PRODUCTION PER 8-HOUR DAY (in acres)

Deck width in inches	Ground speed in MPH			
	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0
60	14.5	16.5	18.5	20.5
52	12.5	14.3	16.1	17.9
48	11.6	13.2	14.9	16.5
36	8.7	9.9	11.1	12.3

### NOTE:

Productivity will vary with conditions. These are conservative averages, based on 15% of maximum speed being lost to turns and obstacles.

—The Editors

continued on page 36

## COMMERCIAL INTERMEDIATE WALK-BEHIND MOWERS

COMPANY NAME	MODEL NAME	CUTTING WIDTHS	ENGINE SIZE (HP)	SELLING POINTS	
Ariens	Commercial	32, 36	12, 12.5	gear transmission; convenient controls; large pneumatic caster wheels dual drive belts; 1" dia. spindle in heavy-duty cast iron	Circle No. 300
		48, 60	14, 16		
Bunton	Commercial	36, 48, 52, 61	14, 16, 18	dual hydrostatic drive; Eliminator grass mulcher and BLC Leaf Mulcher attachments available	Circle No. 301
Encore	Pro	32	12, 12.5	Peerless 5-speed trans.; double V-band belt, unique corners allow close trimming; Hydro-Sense has fewer moving parts	Circle No. 302
		36, 48	12, 12.5, 13, 14		
		60	16		
Exmark	5-speed	32	8.5, 12.5	basic mower	Circle No. 303
	Viking	36, 48	12.5, 14	Micro-Mulching, TriVantage deck and hydrostatic drive available	
	Turf Tracer	52, 60	14, 18, 20	floating cutting decks; anti-scalp rollers; hydrostatic drive available	
F.D. Kees	MBV models	36, 48	14	5-gal. fuel tank; easily adjustable front wheels; Peerless 5-speed transmission	Circle No. 304
	MKW models	36, 48	12.5		
Ferris	Ultra-Belt	36, 48	13	8-speed drive; runaway stopper	Circle No. 305
	Hydro-Walk	36, 48, 52, 61	13, 14, 18	ComfortPlus easy controls; dual hydrostatic drives, easy controls	
Gravely	Pro Series	32, 36	12, 12.5	Individual twin belt drives; heavy duty control linkage; choice of power unit/mower deck combinations; variety of discharges	Circle No. 306
		36, 40	12.5, 14		
		50, 60	16, 17, 18		
Honda	HRC7013ZXA	36,48	13	two-step cutter deck; clippings can be bagged or mulched; Infinitely variable speeds; blade brake system; dual drive double-wide traction belt; deck: 7 gauge sides, 10 gauge top	Circle No. 307
H'd Price	Turf Blazer	36, 48	12.5	floating deck; quick height adjusting fixed deck; individual brakes; large casters	Circle No. 308
Jacobsen	CrewKing	36, 48	14	floating deck; quick height adjusting fixed deck; individual brakes; large casters	Circle No. 309
		32, 36, 48, 60	12.5, 16		
J. Deere	Commercial 38	38	12.5, 14	entry-level price; decks, engines interchangeable with Deere 48s & 54s wet-disk drive system; exclusive oscillating deck	Circle No. 310
	Commercial Walk-Behinds	48, 54	14, 17		
Kubota	CW1336	32	12.5	4-cycle, air-cooled overhead valve engine; five forward speeds	Circle No. 311
Lesco	Commercial	32, 36	12.5	extra-deep, balanced cutting deck; double V-belt traction drive	Circle No. 312
		48	12.5, 17		
Ransomes	Bobcat Classic	36, 48	12.5	most popular model	Circle No. 313
	Bobcat	32, 36, 48	12.5, 14		
		54	14		
		61	18		
Bobcat Hydro	54, 61	18, 20	no drive belts; blade stops within 5 secs. of drive disengagement		
Scag	SW series	32, 35.5	12.5	twin power belts, comfortable, patented operator presence controls	Circle No. 314
		48	14		
		52	14, 18, 20		
		61	18,20		
	SWZ series	35.5, 48	14	cast iron hydro drive system; positive reverse; comfortable controls	
		52	14, 18, 20		
61	18, 20				
Snapper	Pro Series	36, 48,	12.5,	gear drive; loop handlegrip available; choice of engine/deck combinations variable speed drive; eight models	Circle No. 315
		52, 61	14, 18		
	Commercial	32.5, 36.5, 48,5	12, 12.5, 14		
Toro	Proline	32, 36, 44,	12.5, 14	traction units and cutter decks can be mixed & matched; 48" deck features patented Recycler feature	Circle No. 316
		48, 52, 62	16, 18		
Woods	CM36, 48	36, 47.5	13	8-speed shift-on-the-fly; fingertip control dual transmissions	Circle No. 317
	Dual HydroWalk	52	14		

Source: LM mail/phone survey, August 1992

## Mower sales steady, at least

■ "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

That quote, from Mark Twain, could fairly easily be applied to sales of intermediate walk-behind rotary mowers to the golf and landscape markets, according to manufacturers.

Though there has been a country-wide hiatus on buying capital goods, the slow state of the economy hasn't made a dis-

cernible dent in sales of mid-sized walk-behind rotary mowers.

"Based on what I heard at the OPEI show," notes Mike Schaefer of F.D. Kees, "everybody's pretty optimistic about this coming year."

Stan Byers reports Bunton sales being "up slightly," and Exmark's Harold Nielsen says recent sales have been encouraging since they've "taken a surge in the last 60

days, probably because of the rainy weather early in the season."

Also typical of the comments we've been hearing was that of Jack Steinhour of Woods Div. of Hesston. "It's been a mixed bag," he told us. "Our first quarter was pretty good, but June was like somebody closed the door."

"The weather has created some problems, with rain in the Midwest and heat in the East. So this will be a status quo-type year for us."

Steinhour notes that dealer inventories are apparently becoming depleted and that the demand for repair parts has indicated a preference by golf course superintendents and landscapers to run their old equipment longer than usual.

According to the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, sales this year of all walk-behind power mowers—including those smaller models to the homeowner—have declined 2.3 percent from 1991, which means that commercial walk-behinds are probably more than holding their own in relation to the total power mower market.

—J.R.

### WALKER DOES TOP LEVEL WORK ON THE ROOF



When Atlanta based landscape contractor, **Scapes Landscape Management**, wanted to improve efficiency in mowing the award winning Northpark Town Center Rooftop Park, they found Walker fit the job. Steven Coffey, owner of Scapes, told us:

We were surprised to find the Walker gave a better quality cutting job on the Zoysia turf grass than the walk behind reel mower we had been using. In fact, the building management asked us to continue using the "new" mower on their project after the first week we used Walker. Best of all, while improving quality, we cut our job time with the efficiency of the Walker rider. And Walker fits the job because it was compact enough to fit in the service elevator to ride to the third floor park.

*We invite you to discover Walker quality and efficiency on your top level work.*

WALKER MFG. CO. • 5925 E. HARMONY RD., FORT COLLINS, CO 80525 • (303) 221-5614



#### Walk-behinds from page 34

● **Options?** Mulching blades are becoming more popular as laws are passed that limit the amount of yard waste going to sanitary landfills. Grasscatchers are offered by nearly every manufacturer. For an additional \$5 or \$10, you can purchase debris bags. Sulkys (sit-behind attachments) and velkys (stand-behind attachments) are also popular options.

● **Inexpensive pricetag or not?** Most of the 32- to 60-inch machines LM viewed were in the \$2500 to \$5000 price range, depending on size and options. Make sure not to buy too much machine, or it will take longer to pay for itself. Make sure, also, not to buy a machine that is too small, or your crews won't be operating at maximum productivity.

● **Finally, is the dealer customer-conscious?** Are warranties fair? Does the dealer have a dependable service department? Are parts available immediately, or must they be shipped from the manufacturing facility? Is the sales staff helpful? (It might not be a bad idea to talk to other customers of the dealer before making the final purchase.)

—Jerry Roche