

GOLF 'SCAPING

Buying specialized equipment

Here are some concepts to consider when hunting for that 'dream machine' that does exactly what you want it to do.

by Steve and Suz Trusty

■ As turf care has become more exacting, the equipment used has become increasingly specialized. To intelligently purchase a piece of specialized equipment, you must consider function, productivity, durability, minimal downtime, and innovation.

Specialized equipment must be innovative enough to invoke the "oh yeah" response—as in, "Oh, yeah, that's what I was looking for" or "Oh, yeah, that's how to tackle this problem."

It must perform a certain function or set of functions more effectively than cur-

rently-available equipment.

It must increase productivity by making turf care easier, faster, more efficient, less costly—or any combination of these benefits.

It must be durable, able to hold up during the kind of use for which it was designed even when operated under the worst possible circumstances.

It must have minimal downtime.

Problem-solvers—A major attribute of specialized equipment is its ability to solve an existing problem.

A persistent problem for golf course superintendents is turf wear and soil compaction caused by regular mowing on greens. A solution: the cutting unit design for a triplex that is offset to the left, allowing the operator to reverse the clean-up cut. By mowing in the opposite direction from the previous cutting pattern on the green, the tires travel across a different area, minimizing turf wear and ground compaction.

Other features you might want:

● Reel mower technology with an electro-hydraulic control switch to easily and quickly raise and lower the cutting units.

● Turf groomers or conditioners that pop up out of the way when they're not needed, and pop back into place when they are.

● Utility vehicles with bench seats to accommodate operator and a passenger.

● Full pressure lube systems with standard oil filters to maintain the oil pressure under various conditions.

● Effective overall operation, including stability, maneuverability, sure-footedness, quality of cut, quiet engine that is liquid-cooled for long life, high horsepower-to-weight ratios, and fuel efficiency.

● Versatility for multiple uses.

For example, attachments for a bunker rake that are designed to tackle specific tasks, such as an aluminum front blade to increase the width for more productivity; a blade attachment for leveling dirt; and a blade that can be set at an angle for windrowing cores after aerating a green.

Serviceability—Serviceability is a major consideration. Equipment users must know the answers to questions like:

✓ How easy is it to service?
✓ Where are the service points located?

✓ What must be removed?
✓ What tools are needed?
✓ What must be done to gain access to the major components?

✓ When problems occur, how much time will it take a technician to diagnose them?

✓ How long will it take to get parts?

Commonality, using the same design features in multiple applications throughout an equipment line, makes diagnosis and repairs easier. It also helps keep parts prices down.

Re-design by committee—Understanding that equipment users are

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It's this type of in-depth examination you should make before purchasing specialized equipment. Here, a greensmower gets a complete once-over during a special program sponsored by John Deere Co.

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the best consultants, companies like John Deere are starting feedback programs. In August, five groups of superintendents from across the U.S. and Canada plus distributors and overseas representatives from the Pacific Rim and Europe met at Pinnacle Golf Club in Milan, Ill. for 1-1/2-day sessions. Equipment in various stages was tested by the end users, who then provided feedback on performance and suggestions for improvements. As a direct result, Deere engineers relocated the ignition switch on the 2243 greensmower and simplified the directional marking for raising and lowering the cutting unit.

These programs prove that it pays for end-users like golf course superintendents to speak up when they have ideas. Open communications help the entire industry develop specialized equipment that truly fits specific needs.

—Steve and Suz Trusty are freelance writers specializing in the green industry. Their office is in Council Bluffs, Ia.

Spin grinding is better, says LM reader

■ To the editor:

I am writing in response to the article "Grinding, sharpening blades" on page 36 of the August issue.

No longer is lapping a normal procedure for sharpening reels, except when spin grinding is not possible. Spin grinding takes about 10 minutes per reel, and when properly adjusted will last about five or six weeks.

Once you lap a spin grind, it defeats the purpose of the grinding, not to mention creating excessive wear on the reel and bedknife. When you grind the reel and bedknife, you put a sharp edge on each one. Why should you have to do anything more?

Also, when purchasing bedknives and reels, I suggest buying original equipment. It will let you go for a longer period of time before having to grind again, and you will receive a far superior quality of cut. The money you save from buying aftermarket parts is just not worth it.

Three important points to consider:

- 1) Get a good understanding of the history and theory of reel mowers.
- 2) There should be no reel-to-bedknife contact on your mowers.
- 3) Think about purchasing a spin grinder and bedknife grinder to do the work yourself. If that is not possible, then have someone (like Lee Heckman at Express Reel Grinding, phone 407-778-2909) do it for you.

For more information on grinders or the history and theory, you can contact me or Heckman, or you can call your local Express Reel dealer and ask about setting up a presentation.

Jay Rogers
TPC at Eagle Trace
Coral Springs, Fla

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