

Smart scheduling

Versatility, like using diversified roving crews, is the key to this super-efficient maintenance agency.

■ Keeping 450 acres of rolling parklands beautifully manicured is a challenge in itself. Include high-use athletic fields and the challenge increases dramatically.

That is the task performed daily by the Gainesville (Ga.) Parks and Recreation Agency. Assistant director Roy Hammond is responsible for coordinating the labor schedules and equipment needs to meet the challenge. "There are no 'Keep off the Grass' signs here," Hammond says. "We encourage people to enjoy our beautiful parks...and our mild winters and warm summers draw people to the parks year-round."

For maximum efficiency, the city is divided into four main areas of responsibility. The high visibility areas, such as the 55-acre City Park in the center of town, are assigned to a team of one supervisor and three part-time helpers.

Three teams made up of one supervisor and two part-time workers are assigned, respectively, to the wilderness trails, small neighborhood parks around the city, and as a "roving crew." The roving crew moves throughout the city to take care of various odd-sized areas of land owned by the city and provides support for the other crews



Outfront zero-radius riding mowers are the primary mowers in the high visibility and high-use tracts. These are equipped with cutting decks ranging from 52 to 72 inches.

when needed.

"We try to do most of our cutting from 8 to 11 a.m., especially in the high-use areas," says Hammond. "We have a crew go in with two of our Grasshopper riding mowers and they are able to cut these areas quickly, before we get too many visitors."

In addition to day-to-day scheduling considerations, however, seasonal scheduling is a year-round proposition. The annual schedule (see box) helps Hammond's agency maintain one of the most cost-efficient and successful maintenance programs in the country.

Choosing and maintaining durable equipment is important when staying on schedule. Outfront zero-radius riding mowers are the primary mowers in the high-visibility and high-use tracts. Mower cutting decks range from 52 to 72 inches. Some walk-behinds are also used in those places inaccessible to larger equipment.

Areas that need a specially manicured look, such as the 50 acres of athletic fields,

are cut shorter using the Quik-D-Tatch Vac grasscatching systems.

In addition to cutting and landscaping, many of the agency's personnel can perform electrical work, welding, bricklaying and other valuable tasks. That way, when it rains or during the off-season, the teams can build pavilions, shelters and picnic tables.

"When the operators know they are part of a team and that they have a say in the entire Gainesville park system, they take a lot of pride in their work," says Hammond. "That pride is evident in the many compliments we receive from our citizens."

Hammond points out that during 25 weeks of the year, 60 to 100 softball teams enjoy the grass infields of the city's ball diamonds each weekend and 60 to 70 teams play on the fields each weeknight. "But activities take place in all of our parks throughout the year," says Hammond. "We can't let up our guard any time of the year."

GAINESVILLE (GA.) PARKS & RECREATION AGENCY

maintenance schedule

Task	Time of year
Aeration	Oct. and Nov.
Controlled burn-off	late Jan. thru Feb.
Fertilization	spring and fall
Mowing	March thru mid-Nov.
Pre-emergence weed control	Dec. thru Feb.
Seeding	Oct. and Nov.