

# BEFORE you buy...

## Questions to ask yourself before getting out your wallet this spring.

### ■ Is the equipment I own really worn out?

There's no reason to replace a truck, tractor or mower that works well—but it also isn't smart to squeeze a few more months of service from a machine that is slow and inefficient. It can also break down when needed the most.

### Is it perfectly good, but shabby?

If so, consider a replacement seriously because of the impression such an unattractive-looking mower, power vac or other essential landscaping equipment will make on customers and employees. They'll feel that they're getting a professional job when shiny new and professional-looking equipment is used. Employees appreciate the prestige of using new equipment.

### Can it do the landscaping work I need easily and efficiently?

The sprayer you own, for example, doesn't easily spray weeds, trees or ornamentals. But you only need it for lawns—and it does this work well. So why buy a new sprayer?

But if you're planning for future busi-

ness growth, you'll probably require a more versatile model since you'll use it more frequently and for many different types of work that

you may not do now. Thus, you might outgrow your present sprayer's usefulness, won't have the necessary versatility, carrying capacity or speed to meet your new workload.

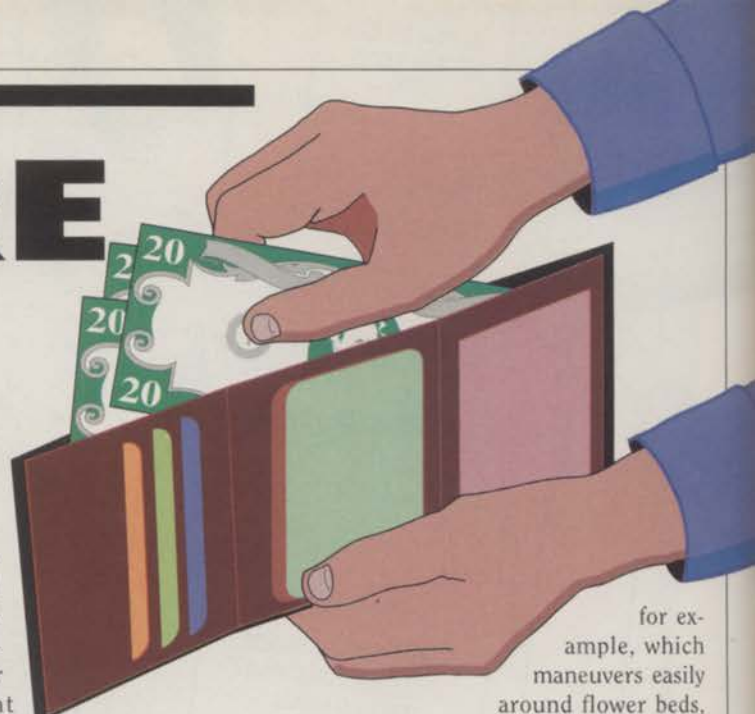
### How high is the quality and how good is the design of the unit I plan to purchase?

If it's cheaply built and poorly designed, you won't get a good payback, and downtime for repairs will chase away customers, profits and employees, warns Robert R. Riley, president of Green Pro Cooperative Services in Hempstead, N.Y.

Companies that purchase quality equipment are generally more successful, he notes, because they can take on more work faster and attract more new customers.

### Will it considerably reduce present labor costs by requiring fewer employees or taking less time?

A latest model all-terrain slicer/seeder,



for example, which maneuvers easily around flower beds,

hills and most other terrains, can be well worth its price. It will also be a real bargain since it can be used repeatedly for free after it's purchased, excepting for minimal operating costs. Employee salaries, on the contrary, must be paid regardless of how efficiently they do (or don't) work.

—Bess Ritter May, the author of this article, is a freelance writer who is based in Philadelphia.

## AFTER YOU PURCHASE...

● Do you carefully train employees to use the new equipment properly and to its best advantage via hands-on demonstrations, lectures and a review of the owner's manual?

● Do you set up a preventive maintenance program for the new equipment and keep careful records? In a recent survey done for the Toro Company, here is how often maintenance is conducted:

daily	34%
weekly	31%
monthly	18%
none	17%

● How do you service equipment when necessary? Of the respondents to the Toro survey, 49 percent keep service technicians on the payroll. The remainder depend on either commercial service dealers or distributor service departments.

—B.R.M.

## SEVEN MORE QUESTIONS

- 1) Does it have safety features that will reduce accidents?
- 2) Are replacement parts available locally at reasonable cost?
- 3) Can additional parts be ordered later to prevent the new machine from becoming obsolete too quickly?
- 4) Will I use it often enough to justify its purchase?
- 5) Does the manufacturer offer acceptable guarantees and warranties?
- 6) Can the company supply testimonials from satisfied users?
- 7) Will the machine be featured or demonstrated at an upcoming trade show where I can observe it in action?

—B.R.M.