

Nuts and bolts: shopping for mower parts and more

by John B. Calsin, Jr.

■ Some of the following tips will save you money on equipment parts and service. They come from Tim Yearsley and Jim Hash of M.S. Yearsley & Sons of West Chester, Pa., and Bill Neff of Main Line Mowers in Berwyn, Pa.

● **Shop around for the right dealer.** Talk with sales, parts and service people. Do your peers recommend one place over another? Location sometimes makes a difference, too. In some areas, there are numerous equipment and parts sales companies. Competition works in the buyer's favor. In other areas, your options are more limited.

● **Buy back-ups for your high-wear parts.** Some of these might include extra filters, belts for mowers, spare blades, gauge wheel and pins, etc.

● **Check with the dealer to see if commonly-needed parts are normally in stock.** Ask for several parts by their specific number rather than just accepting the counterman's "sure, we carry it." This extra homework on your part, will pay off.

● **Ask if the dealer's parts department has a next-day or overnight policy.** Are their suppliers set to handle rapid shipments?

● **Ask how much experience the mechanics in the service department have.** How long have they been there? Is there a lot of turnover? A new mechanic, under pressure during the busy season, may create more problems rather than solve them.

During the off-season, other factors may apply.

● **Ask about special discount plans.** Often unadvertised, special stock order plans are offered by some manufacturers. Shipment might take three weeks or longer. But the dealer may be able to pass on an extra discount if the part isn't needed quickly. Usually, with this plan, you have to buy in volume to help the dealer buy in volume from his supplier.

● **Change the oil and clean filters at least once a week** during the busy season. You might want to change as many as two or more times a week, depending on the equipment's total running hours. Service costs are in the \$40 to \$60 per hour range, so 30 minutes of preventive maintenance can save money and allow you more cutting time.

● **Have a spare parts kit or "breakdown box."** The kit should contain, at the least, mower blades, belts, air filters, fuel filters, spark plugs, tools to make the changes, lubricant to spray cables, and perhaps a spare tire, plugging kit or tube.

Some of these suggestions will take a little extra time and up-front money. But at year's end, the bottom line should be healthier, and your stress level lower.

—The author is a freelance writer based in West Chester, Pa.

**Chart,
list of mowers,
page 10**

Gravely Pro 300 series with gravity feed fuel system.

Bunton: 28- and 60-inch cutting decks.



Howard Price handles knolls and berms well, company claims.



Scag's SWZ makes no-scutt 'zero' turns.



Grasshopper: with Quik-D-Tach decks, mulching units.



ROTARY MOWERS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL MARKET

SUPPLIER	MODEL	SPECIFICATIONS
Alamo Circle No. 311	Grass Flex	Cuts grass evenly and quickly. The three wings are supported by four caster wheels on each wing. Wings fold up to a maximum width of 8.5' for transport.
Bunton Circle No. 312	28"-60" commercial mowers	Variable-drive walk-behind mowers have indexed speed control, quick mower blade disengagement and outstanding maneuverability. Safety interlock system.
Dixie Chopper Circle No. 313	X-Series	The X-Series features 2-cylinder, Kohler engines, at 20hp or 22hp. Maximum speed 8mph; wheel base 44"; overall width 54"; overall length, 75"; six-gallon fuel tank.
Dixon Circle No. 314	ZTR mowers	These riding mowers have 42", 50" or 60" cuts. Electric clutch; Kohler engines; all models have electric start. The zero turning radius reduces mowing time.
John Deere Circle No. 315	F1145 series front mowers	Yanmar diesel; three cylinders; hydrostatic U-type transmission; heavy-duty rear-wheel-drive axle; hydraulic PTO clutch. The transmission, differential, 2-speed axle and planetary final drives are also used on the company's 855 utility tractor. Wet-disk brakes allow constant side-hill feathering with almost no wear or adjustment.
Encore Circle No. 316	Pro-Line walk-behind mowers	Walk-behind and steerable sulky. Dual V-belts to each rear wheel; six-inch brake drums; 52" deck; 20-hp liquid-cooled Kawasaki engine. Zero-turning ability for tight spots and trimming; heavy-duty, impact resistant anti-scalp roller is standard on the Pro 60.
Exmark Circle No. 317	Turf Tracer hydro	60" or 52" TriVantage decks are fully-welded, gauge steel. centered speed controls for left- or right-handed operation. Cutting heights from 1.5" to 4.5". Optional 3-bushel grass catcher; electro-magnetic clutch PTO; 5-gallon tank. 12-volt battery.
Ferris Industries Circle No. 318	Commercial mowers	Rotary mowers from 13hp/32" walk-behinds to 22hp/72" riders; belt drive and hydro models; Pro Series riders are designed to cut up to a full 72" at normal mowing speeds; 5-year warranty.
Grasshopper Circle No. 319	Zero-Turn Front Mowers	PTO shaft-driven outfront decks; Quik-D-Tatch Combo Mulching Deck (U.S. patent pending) in five sizes from 44" to 72." The Quik-D-Tatch mounting system (U.S. patent pending) with self-contained deck stand lets operator remove and re-attach deck or other accessory.
Gravely Circle No. 320	Pro 300 Series	Kawasaki, air-cooled engine; gravity feed fuel system; manual recoil start; max speed 5.4 mph; individual band-type wheel brakes; the latest in hydrostatic transmission benefits; hand controls make it easier to operate; two independent pumps and motors for zero turning radius.
Howard Price Circle No. 321	Turf Blazer walk-behind mowers	Kawasaki engines; 12.5-17 hp; one cylinder; solid state ignition; 4-gallon tanks. The company has a new 91" deck which is available on choice of three traction units, ideal for large projects with a capacity up to 4.6 acres. Handles knolls and berms well.
Jacobsen Circle No. 322	Turfcats T422D	Hydraulic 4-wheel drive and differential lock; diesel power; hydraulic PTO; wide-core radiator; full-pressure lubrication; superior hill-climbing traction; wide stance and low center of gravity for stability; hydraulic PTO means quieter operation.
Kubota Circle No. 323	GF1800	4-wheel drive; can switch to 2-wheel drive; turning radius of 17.3"; bevel-gear drive system; hydrostatic transmission; 8.4-mph maximum forward speed; designed to be very versatile; three mower decks can be used; hopper-type or bag grass catchers.
Lesco Circle No. 324	Walk-behind mowers, three decks	48", 36" and 32" decks; 4-cycle Kawasaki or Kohler engines; 5-gallon fuel tank; four forward speeds; 6-inch drum brakes. Extra-deep, balanced cutting decks for excellent maneuverability.
Ransomes America Corporation Circle No. 325	Bob-Cat T-3100	48" or 61" cutting decks; Kohler engines; durable hydrostatic transmission; 7-mph top speed. Optional features include an electric deck lift, grass collector and leaf mulcher.
Scag Circle No. 326	SWZ Zero-Turn	Designed for high productivity and profitability; the company says the SWZ will reduce cutting time by 20-40 percent. Independent power to each wheel allows no-scuff zero-radius turning.
Snapper Circle No. 327	Pro 7 Series	The company reports its mid-size walk-behinds have been redesigned for easier maintenance.
Toro Circle No. 328	Groundsmaster 300 Series	Traction and stability are improved with extra large turf tread tires; 4-wheel drive in the 325-D model; operator comfort a priority; liquid-cooled engines.
Walker Circle No. 329	Mid-size commercial mowers	Features custom designed sealed gear drive axle with machine cut gears, ball bearings and ductile cast iron axle and hub; dual hydrostatic zero -turn radius.

Source: LM survey, February 1995. Not all-inclusive due to space limitations.