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Maintenance does matter

From 21 years of trial and error, here are a few things about equipment maintenance that I've learned the hard way.

1. *Don't wait for downtime to perform needed maintenance.* The longer you let something go, the worse it gets.

2. *Employ your own mechanic.* Realistically, most of us can't afford to do that, so it's important to build a strong relationship with a reliable service center.

3. *Maintain good records on all pieces of equipment, and put them in a separate storage area.* Also keep a running maintenance file on each major piece of equipment that contains all receipts regarding each one's care.

4. *Before buying any new piece of equipment, "kick the tires."* State field days and such events as the Green Industry Expo are excellent places to do this.

5. *Locate others in your industry who actually own a piece of equipment you're about to buy and ask them about it.*

6. *When you decide to buy, research the dealer thoroughly!* Ask serious questions:

- How long has the dealer been a dealer?
- Do they regularly stock commonly used parts?
- Do they employ an experienced mechanic?
- What are their service policies and how do they treat warranty work?

7. *After you buy, you will discover that every piece of equipment has a few parts that frequently wear.* Whenever you have to replace one of these, buy two.

Let's talk trucks!

8. *If at all possible, limit the number of people who drive a vehicle.* Not only does it get driven one way all



Keeping tabs on your trucks' maintenance needs will keep them around longer.

the time, but the driver will almost certainly take some "possession" of it and thus look out for its welfare.

9. *As your operation grows, keep a spare truck around to fill-in, or replace another that is down for maintenance.* Doing this with other equipment is often easier and less expensive than actually keeping an extra vehicle or two. It always amazes me as to how frequently each week they are used.

10. *For all equipment maintenance, keep a blackboard.* As maintenance problems come to your attention, list them on a large "To Do List" or "Rainy Day Board" that is posted in a visible location.

Finally, maintain equipment well enough to give it a long useful life span. At the same time, be aware that older equipment may be costing you more to maintain than it is worth. When that time arrives, as painful as it may be, cut loose and move on.

— *The author is president of The Greenskeeper, Carmel, IN, and past president of PLCAA. He can be reached at 317/846-7131.*