

Rough and tough

Manufacturers tell about the versatility, toughness and power contractors want in construction/installation equipment

BY VICKY POULSEN

Construction and installation equipment versatility makes it hard for contractors to say "no" when it's time to buy. With so much popularity, manufacturers are introducing new equipment that can handle more add-ons.

We went right to the source — the manufacturers and here's what they had to say:

ALLMAND BROTHERS, INC.

Rick Veenstra, Product Manager

Product: TLB loader-backhoe tractors

Design trends: "We have five loader-backhoe tractors that can perform many jobs traditionally reserved for larger machines."

Accessories & attachments: "One new feature that is not currently available is a combination loader bucket and grapple fork that can pick up and transport debris."

Special features: "We have quick-attach plates for loader arms that permit the use of pallet forks or a hydraulically driven auger. The TLBs are available with an auxiliary hydraulics circuit. The front loader joystick control has a built-in bucket float position for quicker, more precise grading and back filling. The backhoe can also be equipped with an optional hydraulic breaker."

Finance terms: Our experience tells us that many contractors lease their machinery, but others purchase them outright."

BOBCAT

Paul Anderson, Attachment Business Manager

Product: Skid steer loader

Design trends: "Users want tools that help them do jobs faster and more comfortably. That's why operator cab options such as air conditioning in our larger Bobcat skid steer loaders are so popular."

Attachments & accessories: "Landscapers want flexible tools, and the compact Bobcat 463 is ideal because of its size and versatility."

Finance terms: "Contractors generally purchase the smaller equipment."

Components and accessories for skid-steer loaders are shown on the production line at Bobcat's factory.

THE BOSS

Rick Robitaille, Marketing Manager

Product: Skid steer power-V plow

Design trends: "Contractors want attachments with greater control and versatility. The trend is to make hitch systems easy. We have also introduced a poly-power-V multi-position plow for pickup trucks. Plows made of polyethylene are becoming popular."

Attachments & accessories: "They offer the power, control and versatility contractors need to work more effectively than with traditional skid steer attachments."

Special features: "Our skid steer power-V plow adapts to any position — V-, scoop, straight or in between. It features a hydraulic side-to-side tilt option."

JOHN DEERE

Kyle Phillips, Product Specialist/Skid Steer

Product: Skid Steer 200 Series (240 & 250)

Design trends: "Contractors want machines that are powerful, versatile and compact. We've designed our products based on what our customers in the field have told us."

Accessories & attachments: "Over 100 attachments fit on these skid steers. This may allow contractors to take on more business. With today's tight labor market, they need equipment that can do many tasks quickly and efficiently."

Special features: "All our models feature our Quick-Tatch system, which uses a self-cleaning, rotating paw to stop dirt from clogging levers. Also, contractors want equip-

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 ment that's small but powerful."

Finance terms: "We probably see more attachments rented than skid steers because it's often cheaper to rent different attachments that you use only once a year."

JOHN DEERE

Terry Brown, Product Manager/Compact Tractors

Product: 4000 series compact utility tractors

Design trends: "Contractors want versatility, convenience and serviceability."

Accessories & attachments: "Adjustable sway bars make attachment and removal of implements to the three-point hitch easy."

Special features: "A well-designed product should have a dual element air cleaner with a primary air filter on the outside. We've equipped these tractors with an air cleaner restriction indicator that warns the operator when the air cleaner needs to be serviced and put all essential service checks on one side of the machine."

Finance terms: "Many contractors rent equipment locally, then make a purchasing decision."

DITCH WITCH

Richard Greenwell, Product Manager/Compact Line

Brent Bolay, Product Manager/Heavy-Duty Line

Product(s): 3700 compact trencher; 1030/1230 pedestrian trencher; 5700

trencher; HT25 light utility trencher

Design trends: "Landscapers use our machines for installing irrigation systems, fencing and electric lights. Compact, light utility vehicles are also important."

Attachments & accessories: "Our HT25 can be equipped with a cab, backhoe, backfill blade and one of three available digging attachments."

Special features: "Our customers wanted a trencher that would go through a 36-in. wide gate, so we developed the 35-1/2-in. wide HT25 with zero turn radius."

Finance terms: "Large contractors typically buy equipment while smaller ones rent."

FINN CORPORATION

Dana Ellefson, Director/maintenance product division

Product: Eagle skid steer 250 (compact)

Design trends: "Contractors want units that can get into tight places but have as much power as the larger units."

Accessories & attachments: "The most com-



mon attachments are augers and power heads. For waterscapes, you can dig 36-in. holes with our machines and use a trencher with a reversed chain to sculpt the sides."

Special features: "Our universal faceplate allows the use of all standard mini-skid steer attachments currently on the market. Another important feature is the ability to haul the compact skid steer with up to 10 attachments on a trailer."

Finance terms: "We see a mix of both leasing and purchasing."

HUSQVARNA

Ken Taylor, Business Unit Manager/Commercial Lawn & Garden

Product: Power Cutter

Design trends:

"Our sod cutter offers an exclusive 4-wheel drive design, which increases traction and requires less operator effort. Our Power Cutters have an ergonomically designed handle and "air injection" system."



Attachments & accessories: "End-users want machines that can perform multiple tasks."

Special features: "With our Power Cutters, a contractor can change the type of blade to perform different tasks or purchase a portable cart and water cart for larger tasks."

Finance terms: "Some contractors believe in leasing this type of equipment; others purchase outright or look for financing options."

KANGA

Brent Matthews, Vice President

Product: Mini-skid steer loader

Design trends: "There will be smaller versions of these machines getting into smaller areas."

Attachments & accessories: "We design and manufacture most of our attachments, so they're built to work with this machine. A hot item is our new Kanga Kid, a 30-in.-wide, 13-hp skid steer that can fit into tiny places."

Finance terms: "The average contractor will keep a machine for three to five years. When they update, they purchase a new one."

TEXTRON GOLF, TURF & SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

Peter Whurr, Vice President/Product Management

Products: Cushman, Turf-Truckster, Cushman, Commander, Ryan Jr. Sod Cutter

Design trends: "We're interested in designing equipment that reduces noise, eliminates noxious fumes and features a tighter gap between service intervals. We're also interested in operator comfort and safety."

Attachments & accessories: "The back end of our trucks can take a PTO, so any PTO-driven piece of equipment up to a certain horsepower can be used with this product."

Special features: "With our sod cutter, controls are within easy reach. With our Truckster, the carrying capacity is 2,500 lbs. for the three-wheel version and 2,850 lbs. for the four-wheel version."

Finance terms: "We see a mixture of both leasing and purchasing."

TORO

Marc Bowers, Marketing Manager/Toro

Sitework systems

Product: Dingo compact utility loaders

Design trends: "There are an ever-expanding number of attachments for compact utility loaders that increase the number of applications, and manufacturers now offer walk-behind track-driven units."

Attachments & accessories: "With over 40 attachments available, a compact utility loader can accomplish anything on a job site. Some of the more popular attachments are the trencher, auger, ad-

justable forks, leveler, multi-purpose tool and buckets."

Special features: "Toro has introduced the Dingo 420 TX, a walk-behind, dedicated track drive machine that provides more ground engaging, power reducing slippage, single-hand steering and joystick-operated loader arms."

Finance terms: "The most economical, long-term solution is to purchase a compact utility loader with three or four attachments. An advantage of leasing is that the company or person leasing the equipment is often responsible for maintenance and repairs." **LM**

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