

# Contractor favorites

**C**ontractors expect a lot from their trucks. They want accessibility, good gas mileage and proven brands they can rely on — all for a fair price.

However, there's always a new model that comes along that makes their "far-out" trucks seem "far gone." We wanted to know what features matter most when it comes to buying a truck, so we grilled three landscape contractors mercilessly on the topic. Here's what they had to say:

## HighGrove Partners



Greg Nelson

**Name:** Greg Nelson  
**Title:** Fleet Manager  
**Location:** Smyrna, GA  
**2002 gross revenue:** \$15.3 million  
**Business mix:** 80% commercial, 20% residential

**Employees:** 200 year-round/full-time and 30 seasonal/part-time. There are 19 three-person crews (strictly maintenance) and two floriculture crews in Atlanta.

**Company profile:** In business since 1991, the company's services are divided as follows — 55% landscape maintenance; 35% landscape design/build; 7% irrigation installation/maintenance; 2% chemical lawn care/fertilization; and 1% snow removal.

**Trucks:** "We have a total of 107 vehicles, in-

cluding three utility work vehicles, eight dump trucks of various sizes, 42 pickup trucks, 10 SUVs, four irrigation install and repair trucks, 23 open ramp trucks, eight van body ramp trucks, three Turf Care spray trucks, and one mechanic service truck."

**Features:** "All of our vehicles are built to do the intended job. Having lockable storage for the small equipment is our 'must-have' feature. For management vehicles, such as 1/2-ton and 3/4-ton trucks, driver comfort features is the must-have. Most of these are now ordered as base-extended cab units with seating and stereo upgrades. For upper management and sales vehicles, four-door seating is a must-have."

**Finance methods:** "We have bought and leased, but we're currently acquiring all new vehicles with open-end leases. About half are owned and half are leased. Cost considerations would be truck specific. The sky

isn't the limit when building a truck, and we won't go bare bones either. Our trucks are more middle-of-the-road priced. The truck has got to fit the job requirements, it must be efficient to work out of and it must present a good image."

**Dream truck:** "A Kenworth SUV or a truck that will never require a brake job. But realistically, I build my dream truck every time we spec out a new ramp truck, SUV or pickup."

## R.A.R. Landscaping Co.



Allan Davis

**Name:** Allan Davis  
**CLP, CSP**  
**Title:** Executive Vice President  
**Location:** Baltimore, MD  
**2002 gross revenue:** \$5.4 million



**Business mix:** 100% commercial

**Employees:** "R.A.R. Landscaping has 120 employees. We have a full-time Director of Human Resources, a full-time sales staff managed by a Director of Sales, Fleet Manager, and various support administrative staff. We have an executive management team of four people — President, Executive Vice President, Controller, and Vice President. Crew sizes range from two to five people. We believe that small crews are the most efficient. We handle all size properties."

**Company profile:** "R.A.R. Landscaping Co. has been in business for over 25 years, servicing the Baltimore metropolitan area. We have five service lines: grounds management, landscape design and installation, snow and ice management, tree care, and holiday decorating. We see grounds management as our core service and add services around it that offer value to our core client base. We have a commercial client base and believe in building lasting relationships."

**Trucks:** "Sales and field managers use small pickups, either Ford Rangers or Toyota Tacomas. We're looking for accessibility, good gas mileage and the ability to occasionally transport something small. Our tree care division uses various specialty vehicles, such as bucket/chipper trucks, spray rigs and regular chipper trucks. Any landscaping or landscape maintenance is handled with Ford F700 and F800 trucks with 14-foot dump bodies on them. We have several that have crew cabs to accommodate larger crews. These trucks have cab protectors and side boxes for storage. They have racks on the sides for handled tools. They also have rear swing doors, and we have custom-installed ramps on the rear. Many of our crews have Ford F350 trucks with either pickup beds or eight-foot dump beds on them. These are versatile and can be used by mowing crews, cleanup crews and install crews."

**Favorites:** "The vehicles I'm most proud of are in our van fleet. Several years ago, we began purchasing off-rental vans from Ryder. These vans are three to four years old and have anywhere from 90,000 to 130,000 miles each. We pay between \$9,000 and \$12,000 for them. We spend an additional few thousand dollars to have them painted red and have our logos emblazoned across them. They're workhorses that we use for everything, including mowing, installation, flower plantings, snow removal and even for repairs in the field. We have racking inside for equipment, and ramps that we built to load them with equipment."

**Finance method:** "We always purchase, not lease, vehicles, and most of the time take the lump sum discounts the manufacturer is offering and arrange for financing through our banks. We try to use the same dealerships and negotiate the best prices we can. We also are on a fleet discount program through Ford. We also occasionally purchase used vehicles, as in the vans, but also for our other operations."

**Dream truck:** "My dream truck would be one that never needs to sit in my lot. The vans come close, because they can be used for so many different jobs. Any vehicle that can be used for multiple functions and put in the field no matter what season is the best."

### Dickerson Landscaping



William Dickerson

**Name:** William Dickerson

**Title:** President

**Location:** Tallahassee, FL

**2002 gross revenue:** \$700,000

**Business mix:** 60% residential, 40% commercial

**Employees:** The number averages around 13 in winter and 17 in summer. Although the company prefers teams of two employees, crew sizes can range between two and five employees depending on the size of the project.

**Company profile:** "Dickerson Landscaping has been serving Tallahassee's landscaping and outdoor maintenance needs for years. We started in 1987 as Dickerson Enterprises, a lawn maintenance company. In 1993, we changed our name to Dickerson Landscaping to encompass the real focus of our company. We now offer an extensive venue of products and services including landscape design and installation, landscape maintenance, and irrigation repair and installation."

**Trucks:** "We've made a few changes with our truck fleet. We had Chevy trucks, but we dropped them and went with Fords and Toyotas. I like Toyotas for their longevity, but they aren't the most suited for this industry, so Fords have been winning out. Our fleet breakdown is as follows — three Ford 150s (2001, 2002), two 1999 Ford 350s, one 1997 Ford 477 Super Duty, two 1998 Toyota T-100s and two 2002 Toyota Tundras."

**Favorite features:** "I would have to say with Ford is the diversity. You can get so many bed designs. The Toyotas you can put through anything and they still go."

**Financing methods:** "We buy new. The reason for that is that we get better prices and warranties. When we're looking for a new truck, we write down what it is we want, then fax it out to all the dealers in the state of Florida and south Georgia. We then sit back and wait for the bids to come in."

**Dream truck:** "Toyota is my favorite, but we're going to be looking at some of the new hybrids coming out just for lawn maintenance like the Super Lawn Trucks."



# Power, versatility, comfort

**Yesterday's options  
are today's standard  
features on many  
model year 2003  
and 2004 trucks**

BY VICKY POULSEN

**W**hether it's a Ford F-150 or a heavy-duty Dodge Ram, we've found that many truck manufacturers have packed their 2003

and 2004 lines with Herculean engine and hauling power, comfortable, spacious seating, greater handling capabilities and more standard features that were once optional. We've picked the hottest trucks — the best of the best — to make this year's list. Which one do you like?

## Chevrolet-GMC

### 2004 Canyon

#### Best features:

► Two in-line engines based on the Vortec 4.2-liter in-line six-cylinder engine. The standard engine, the 2.8-liter Vortec in-line four-cylinder, delivers 175 hp and 185 lbs.-ft. of torque. The optional 3.5-liter Vortec in-line five-cylinder delivers 220 hp and 225 lbs.-ft. of torque

► Five-speed manual transmission, a transfer case for four-wheel-drive models, and the four-speed Hydra-Matic 4L60-E automatic transmission

**2003 Silverado** (available in 3/4- and one-ton pickups, including 3/4-ton 2500HD and one-ton 3500 Series regular cabs, four-door extended cabs, crew cabs and chassis cabs)



GMC's 2003 Silverado with four-door extended cab.

#### Best features:

► Equipped with a Vortec 6000 6.0L V8 with hardened, upgraded valves and seats

► Special versions with reduced Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) (8,500 lbs.) and 9,200-lb. GVWR models are available

► Available with gas or diesel engines — Duramax 6600 6.6L diesel V8 delivers 300 hp at 3,100 rpm and 520 lbs.-ft. (705

Nm) of torque at 1,800 rpm; an optional Vortec 8100 8.1L V8 gas engine has 340 hp at 4,200 rpm and 455 lbs.-ft. (617 Nm) of torque at 3,200 rpm

► Available with the Allison 1000: full electronic control of shift-timing points, five forward speeds and helical-type planetary gear sets for quiet operation

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► A handling and trailering package standard for HD pickups

**2003 GMC TopKick C4500 and C5500 series trucks**

**Best features:**

- GVWR of 16,000 lbs. for C4500; 18,000 to 19,500 lb. GVWRs available in the C5500
- Allows turning diameters as low as 35.3 ft.
- Greater maneuverability and visibility
- Advanced chassis and braking system

**Isuzu**

**2004 NQR**

**Best features:**



GMC's 2003 TopKick offers better visibility.

- GVWR of 17,950 lbs. and body/payload range from 11,733 to 11,965 lbs.
- Body lengths range from 12 to 20 ft. with a choice of four different wheelbase lengths
- A straight channel, ladder-type frame with a section modulus of 7.20 cu. in. and a Resistance Bending Moment (RBM) of 316,800 lbs. for those demanding heavier body applications

- Equipped with front and rear semi-elliptical, multi-leaf springs and shock absorbers
- A front stabilizer bar contributes to greater handling and steering capabilities
- Equipped with ABS
- 4.75-liter, 4HE1-TC, four-cylinder diesel engine
- It incorporates an overhead cam engine design and direct fuel injection. This 4HE1-TC is rated at 175 gross hp at 2,700 rpm and 347 lbs.-ft. gross torque at 2,000 rpm
- A choice of transmissions

**2004 low cab-forward crew cab (NPR-HD and NQR)**

**Best features:**

- Seats a crew of seven people comfortably — three across in the front and four abreast in the back
- Available in two wheelbase configurations — a 150-in. wheelbase accommodates 12-ft. bodies, and a 176-in. wheelbase handles 16-ft. bodies
- The crew cab's diesel engine, coupled with a four-speed overdrive automatic transmission, delivers 175 hp at 2,700 rpm
- Visibility is enhanced with an oversized panoramic-view windshield
- The NPR-HD crew cab is rated at 14,500 lbs. GVWR. The NQR is rated at 17,950 lbs. GVWR
- NPR-HD crew cab features 4,500-lb. GVWR; 150- and 176-in. wheelbases; accommodates 12-ft. bodies
- NQR crew cab features 17,950-lb. GVWR; 150- and 176-in. wheelbases; accommodates 16-ft. bodies

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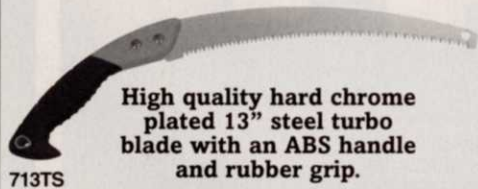


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Dodge's 2003 Dakota features a choice of two Magnum V-8 engines.



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### 2004 Class 6-7 F-Series commercial trucks

#### Best features:

- ▶ Class 6 FSR, Class 6 to 7 FTR and Class 7 FVR are powered by an Isuzu 6HK1-TC diesel engine in two horsepower configurations
- ▶ The 7.8-liter overhead cam engine is turbocharged, intercooled and equipped with electronic fuel injection
- ▶ Installed in the FSR and FTR, the six-cylinder diesel develops 200 hp at 2,400 rpm and 441 lbs.-ft. gross torque at 1,500 rpm. The version used in the higher payload FVR diesel engine develops 230 hp at 2,400 rpm and 506 lbs.-ft. gross torque at 1,500 rpm
- ▶ All F-Series models include as standard an Isuzu MLD6Q six-speed manual overdrive transmission, synchronized in gears two through six. The transmission has a standard PTO opening. An Allison AT545 four-speed automatic transmission is available as an option in the FSR and FTR

### Dodge

#### 2003 Dakota

##### Best features:

- ▶ Choice of two Magnum V-8 engines
- ▶ Dakota Quad Cab offers six-passenger seating
- ▶ New 5-45RFE five-speed automatic transmission with 4.7-liter engine provides a second overdrive ratio
- ▶ Four-wheel disc brakes with rear-wheel anti-lock (RWAL) are now standard on

4WD models and 2WD models

- ▶ 5,350 lbs. GVWR and over

#### 2003 heavy duty Ram 2500/3500

##### Best features:

- ▶ The high output Cummins Turbo Diesel engine is available in the 2500/3500 segment, producing 305 hp at 2,900 rpm and 555 lbs.-ft. of torque at 1,400 rpm
- ▶ Delivers a towing capability of 23,000 lbs. (GCWR)
- ▶ Comes with a 3500 single rear wheel option

### Ford

#### 2004 F-150

##### Best features:

- ▶ Its fully boxed frame is about nine times stiffer torsionally than its predecessor
- ▶ A maximum tow rating of 9,500 lbs. and maximum payload capacity of 2,900 lbs.
- ▶ Regular Cab and SuperCab models have a passenger compartment that is six in. longer, providing more space inside for occupants and their gear
- ▶ A 5.4-liter, 3-valve Triton V-8 engine produces 300 peak hp
- ▶ 8-ft., 6-1/2-ft., and 5-1/2-ft. box lengths offered

#### 2004 F-250/F-350 series super duty

##### Best features:

- ▶ A 32-valve 6.0-liter Power Stroke V-8 diesel engine and five-speed TorqShift automatic transmission
- ▶ A newly designed five-speed gearbox

and electronic control system

- ▶ Transmission's tow-haul mode helps improve shift control under demanding operating conditions



### Hino

#### FB medium-duty Class 5 truck

##### Best features:

- ▶ An 11,000-lb. body and payload capacity
- ▶ It can be spec'd as a flatbed, with stake beds or with a small dump body
- ▶ Powered by a turbo intercooled four-valve overhead cam engine and driven through a five-speed direct drive transmission or optional four-speed automatic
- ▶ Its cabover design makes driving in tight residential areas easy
- ▶ Cab features an enlarged interior with room for three people
- ▶ Six-way adjustable air-ride driver's seat with improved support on a chassis that's supported by long, taper-leaf springs

### Mitsubishi Fuso

#### 2003 FG four-wheel drive cabover

##### Best features:

- ▶ 145-hp, intercooled, turbocharged diesel engine, five-speed manual transmission and optional, limited slip differential
- ▶ Available in Class 3 (12,000 GVWR) and Class 4 (14,050 GVWR)
- ▶ Advanced diesel engines with either



Mitsubishi's 2003 FG 4-wheel drive cabover has a 145-hp engine.



manual or automatic transmissions

- ▶ Three-person cab with side door crush bars and a collapsible steering wheel for added safety

## Toyota

### 2003 Tacoma

#### Best features:

- ▶ Standard four-wheel anti-lock brake system (ABS)
- ▶ 17 model configurations, based on three cab types — standard, extended Xtracab with rear jump seats and the four-door Double Cab. The Tacoma standard-cab and Xtracab models feature a 74.5-in.-long bed. The Double Cab comes with a bed length of 61.5 in.
- ▶ A 142-hp, 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine with 160 lbs.-ft. of torque powers the 4X2 standard cab and features a 1,480-lb. payload capacity
- ▶ PreRunner and 4X4 models are available with two engines, a 150-hp 2.7-liter DOHC four-cylinder that produces 177 lbs.-ft. of torque and a DOHC 190-hp 3.4-liter V6 that puts out 220 lbs.-ft. of torque
- ▶ The V6-powered Tacoma models can tow up to 5,000 lbs.; four-cylinder models tow up to 3,500 lbs.

### 2003 Tundra StepSide Access Cab

#### Best features:

- ▶ Available in V8 Access Cab two-wheel drive and four-wheel drive models in SR5 and Limited grades
- ▶ Available in 15 configurations comprising two cab styles (Regular and Access Cab), two engines (3.4-liter V6 and 4.7-liter i-Force V8), two- and four-wheel drive, two bed lengths (98 in. for regular cab model, 75 in. for Access Cab models) and three model grades (Base, SR5 and Limited)
- ▶ Powered by the 4.7-liter i-Force V8, which produces 240 hp at 315 lbs.-ft. of torque
- ▶ A 3.4-liter DOHC V6 engine is standard in five of the Tundra models and produces 190 hp and 220 lbs.-ft. of peak torque. The V6 engine comes standard with a five-speed manual transmission
- ▶ Offers up to a 1,875-lb. payload capacity (V8 2WD Access Cab SR5) and up to 7,200 lbs. of towing capacity (V8 4x4 regular cab)
- ▶ All V8 models offer a new towing package which includes a Class IV tow hitch

## Cub Cadet

### Series 8000 utility tractors

#### Best features:

- ▶ Power ranging from 40 to 45 hp
- ▶ Shuttle shift transmissions allow for easy, efficient operation and increased maneuverability under any condition

- ▶ Cast-iron engine
- ▶ Standard four-wheel drive operation
- ▶ Optional attachments include loader, backhoe and standard Category I rear mount attachments, which result in a convenient multi-task tractor whether you're pulling, pushing or clearing

### Series 7000 utility tractors

#### Best features:

- ▶ 20 to 36 hp and a choice between gasoline or diesel engines
- ▶ Hydrostatic transmission allows for easy, efficient operation and increased maneuverability under any condition



- ▶ Two- or four-wheel-drive operation keeps tractors from turfing in two-wheel drive and provides maximum traction to operate with four-wheel drive in rough terrain

## John Deere

### ProGator utility vehicle

#### Best features:

- ▶ Available in 23.5-hp diesel and 26-hp gas versions
- ▶ Five-speed, fully-synchronized transmission
- ▶ One-piece axle supporting the rear wheels, and dual leaf spring suspension

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continued from page 66  
instead of coils

- ▶ Hydrostatic steering provides for precision control and a tight turning radius of only 33 in.
- ▶ A 2,650-lb. load capacity

**E-Z-GO Textron**

**Workhorse LX line**

**Best features:**

- ▶ Like the standard Workhorses, the LX models have differential scuff guards, tubular front bumpers, bed liners, horns and fuel gauges or charge meters
- ▶ The LX line offers a 36-volt high-efficiency electric motor, 9-hp twin-cylinder, overhead cam gasoline engine and a 11-hp



twin-cylinder, overhead cam gasoline engine

**Leer Inc.**

**700 Series Tonneau cover**

**Best features:**

- ▶ Fiberglass construction produces a snug-

fitting, tight-sealing lid over the entire cargo space

- ▶ Spring-assisted gas struts make opening and closing the lid easy
- ▶ Entire installation and mounting of the 700 Tonneau engineered without drilling or cutting the pickup bed steel, minimizing any risk of cosmetic damage or rust
- ▶ Instead of a flat surface with no character, the 700 Series features curves and shapes that will improve the pickup truck's overall appearance

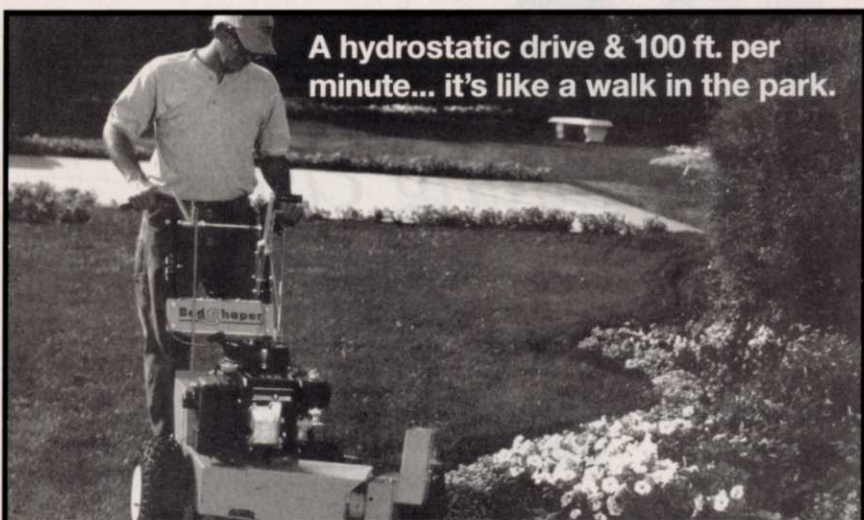


**Omaha Standard**

**Landscaper Body**

**Best features:**

- ▶ 10-gauge sides (available in 40- and 52-in. heights) and rear gate
- ▶ The 48-in. cargo door on the curb side front swings open to allow for loading of palletted materials, balled trees, shrubs and bagged materials
- ▶ Triple acting 16-in. tailgate folds down flat to extend platform length for dumping or spreading materials, and drops 280-degrees for rear loading



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## Polaris

### Professional Series UTV 1500 2x4

#### Best features:

- ▶ 18-hp V-twin air-cooled engine, heavy duty transmission and lowering gear
- ▶ Auto tranny with low, super-low, reverse
- ▶ Can carry a payload of up to 1,250 lbs. and tow 1,000 lbs.
- ▶ Upfront, independent MacPherson strut suspension with 4.6 in. of travel
- ▶ Spacious seating for three

## Reading

### Landscape Body

#### Best features:

- ▶ Side access door (curbside) features reinforced, 14-gauge, two-sided, A-60 galvanized steel; heavy duty, full opening door, two heavy duty hinges on door, draw latch holds with a 51-in. clear door opening width



- ▶ Rear cargo doors are 14-gauge, two-sided, A-60 galvanized

steel, perforated and reinforced — two heavy-duty hinges on each door

- ▶ Four-way double hinged lower tailgate, fully welded and reinforced, converts easily to all purpose platform or flat dump and allows for manual metering of material

## Super Lawn Trucks

### Super Lawn Truck Equipment Storage & Transportation System

#### Best features:

- ▶ Eliminates the need for trailers
- ▶ Equipped with a hydraulically operated ramp that allows large commercial mowers to drive right into the back of the truck

- ▶ Large box-type van is equipped with a hand and power tool storage system
- ▶ Fuel transport tanks carry enough fuel for the whole week



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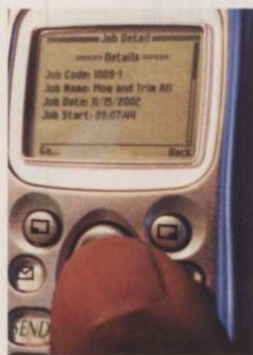
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# Stay in touch

## Stay connected

CLIP Connect from Sensible Software, Inc. offers real-time information exchange between the office and the job site, and simplifies business management to allow for efficient task supervision away from the office. It uses Web access platform technology to keep office and field personnel connected. Using a Web-enabled



cell phone, field personnel can update the CLIP Connect Web portal with job information.

**For more information, contact Sensible Software, Inc. at 800/635-8485 or [www.clip.com](http://www.clip.com) / circle no. 291**

## Small talk

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power output (selectable by channel) to get the user's message through under the most demanding of operating conditions.

**For more information contact Vertex Standard at 800/283-7839 or [www.vxstdusa.com](http://www.vxstdusa.com) / circle no. 292**

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### What's the frequency?

Motorola Spirit XTN Series radios are available in both one-watt and two-watt models with one-channel operation and user-selectable frequencies (56 UHF and 27 VHF). Available in VHF radios for use in and around wooden structures and forested areas or the UHF models for use in and around concrete/steel buildings and structures. Each Spirit XTN-Series radio comes with coded squelch and digital coded squelch.

For more information contact Forestry Suppliers at 800/360-7788 or [www.forestry-suppliers.com](http://www.forestry-suppliers.com) / circle no. 294

### Something in the air

Airput Mobilizing Operations' Air Hours eliminates paper timesheets for field personnel in construction and other service-related industries. Exchange information between any Nextel Internet-ready phone and AirHours' Web site ([www.airhours.com](http://www.airhours.com)) using Nextel On-line wireless Internet service. Collect timesheet and project information around the clock.

For more information contact AirHours at 610/635-1500 or [www.airput.com](http://www.airput.com) / circle no. 295

### Communicate great

The Garmin Rino 110 combines the navigational capabilities of a full-featured, WAAS-enabled, 12-channel parallel GPS receiver with the

reliable communication power of a 22-channel FRS/GMRS radio. This combination allows for peer-to-peer position reporting using the FRS spectrum to transmit your exact location to an-

other Rino 120 within a two-mile radius.

For more information contact Forestry Suppliers at 800/360-7788 or [www.forestry-suppliers.com](http://www.forestry-suppliers.com) / circle no. 296



## The thing practically crawls up walls.

This may very well be the most versatile tractor line on the globe. To be versatile, you've got to do two things first: be agile and be userfriendly. Lots of old guard tractors are so big and clunky that they're hard to maneuver. Yes, they're durable, but difficult. Options can cost you.

Carraro tractors offer a unique array of ergonomic and operational functions built in, and are engineered for simplicity, comfort and increased return on investment.

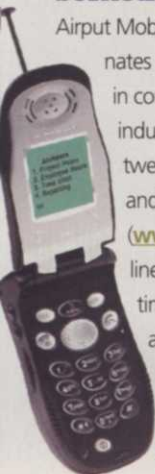
A patented system called "Actio" in all Carraro tractors lets the chassis articulate to all terrain types and each wheel independently grips the ground for superior balance and stability. The center of gravity is so low that it

virtually hugs the turf. Each wheel being the same size means you get equal ground pressure on all 4 wheels, all the time.

Other neat features include a completely reversible seat and control system that changes direction in seconds, loads of attachments that mount front, back and even on top, as well as powerful, yet fuel minimizing, engines that help keep operations costs down.

Recently, Carraro was honored in the "Best of Specialized" category in the international Tractor of the Year competition. So you know quality and engineering are high priorities at Carraro as well as value pricing.

Call us for our free video and more details.



Breaking barriers to better turf.  
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