

Big-ticket equipment now more adaptable to landscaping uses

A wide array of attachments add versatility and efficiency to skid-steer purchases.

■ In your landscape company business plan, in the space beside the word *diversity*, add the words *versatility* and *efficiency*. Keep them in mind when buying equipment, particularly big-ticket items like skid-steer loaders.

This is the type of equipment, particularly with the amazing collection of accessories being made for it, that will allow your company to do more—much more—with fewer people.

"Nobody in the landscape business wants people standing around with shovels and rakes. That's costly," says Mike McPherson, vice president sales for Glenmac/Harley Power Equipment, Jamestown, N.D. Making wise equipment choices will help prevent this.

When buying big equipment, experts say to:

- match equipment as closely as possible to the types of services you offer;

- review the availability of work-saving attachments;
- calculate the recovery of equipment costs; and
- consult with employees on ease of equipment use.

Big items such as loaders and backhoes, more typically used in landscape construction rather than maintenance, represent a sizable financial investment for most landscape professionals. But they

can stretch dollars and increase the productivity of these purchases equipment by also investing in appropriate attachments. Manufacturers offer an ever-widening array of landscape-type attachments for skid-steer loaders and tractors. Most can be mounted quickly and easily.

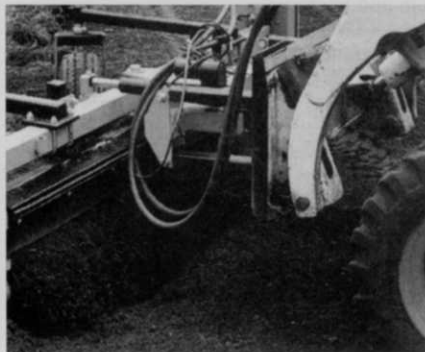
Even "maintenance" equipment such as front mowers and compact tractors can now be fitted with buckets, forks, blades, sweepers, etc. so that they can be used out of season, helping to recover their costs in a shorter time.

"Most people don't realize how versatile their equipment really can be," says Phil Lawrence, equipment designer at Lawrence, Inc., Spring Lake, Mich.

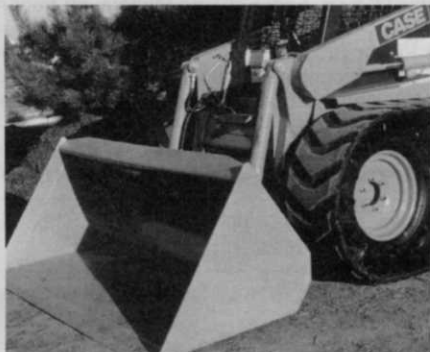
"For example, sometimes a landscaper will dump 30 yards of mulch on the parking lot of a condominium complex and he'll send in four guys with wheel barrows, and they're working like crazy. It just doesn't make sense," says Lawrence. A smaller crew, working with compact tractor equipped with a bucket, would get the job done much faster, decreasing labor costs significantly.

Adds McPherson of Glenmac: "Contractors are always looking for ways to eliminate hand labor. It's unpredictable. They want to keep their businesses small but profitable, and they can do that easier with the right equipment and implements than they can with more employees."

—Ron Hall



Glenmac Power Rake



Case 1840 Uni-Loader



Melroe Bobcat skid-steer loader



Ditch Witch trencher



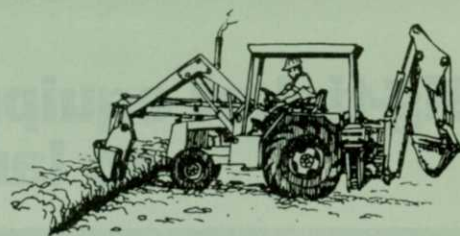
Du-Al 1250A trencher



Mustang 900 Series loader

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

...for the green industry



<p>Ditch Witch Circle No. 300, Reader Card</p>	<p>Underground construction equipment. Trenchers from walk-behind that can be taken through a yard gate to four-wheel-drive models. Vibratory plows. Boring and pircing tools and attachments, including three Jet Trac directional boring systems.</p>
<p>Du-Al Manufacturing Circle No. 301, Reader Card</p>	<p>Model 1250A Trencher for compact utility tractors in the 18 to 35 hp range, patented Hydra-Creep worm gear drive. Model 1025, 1035 backhoes for mounting on tractors or skid steer loaders. Model 107 Commercial Loader.</p>
<p>Ford New Holland Circle No. 302, Reader Card</p>	<p>New Holland skid-steer loaders, nine models, self-neutralizing hand controls, maxiumu forward reach at maximum height. Full line of attachments, Tractor loader/backhoes. Ford powertrains.</p>
<p>Glenmac Circle No. 303, Reader Card</p>	<p>Model Pro-6 Power Landscape Rake, 6-foot design, left or right throw, oil-bath drive, three-point hitch, front-mounted scarifier, double-drive rollers, for 27 to 45 hp range tractors. New: the Model Pro-8 Power Rake with 8-foot design.</p>
<p>Jl Case Circle No. 304, Reader Card</p>	<p>Model 1840 Uni-Loader, Case coupler and bucket design for one-person attachment changes in field, 50 hp diesel, rated operating capacity is 1,350 lbs.</p>
<p>Deere & Co. Circle No. 305, Reader Card</p>	<p>John Deere loaders. Five models, from the Model 375 with 17 hp, Yanmar, three-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel engine, 675-lb. operating load capacity to the Model 875, 65 hp John Deere liquid-cooled diesel, operating load capacity 2,000 lbs Backhoes for tractors and skid-steer loaders. Loaders for compact, utility tractors and series tractors.</p>
<p>Kelley Manufacturing Circle No. 306, Reader Card</p>	<p>Backhoes. Double-acting swing cylinders protected with hydraulic "cushion valve" for smooth operation and less maintenance, digging depths 6 to 8 feet, bucket sizes 12 to 36 inches, two lever control.</p>
<p>Kubota Circle No. 307, Reader Card</p>	<p>Model BT650 designed to be used with company's B20 tractor, 2,888-lb. digging force, 92.9-inch digging depth, automatic return-to-dig mechanism.</p>
<p>La Barge Equipment Co. Circle No. 308, Reader Card</p>	<p>Attachments Plus Hopper/Scoop (1.2-yard capacity), fits any three-point hitch and many front mowers with adaptable lift fram. Fork Set/Tote Platform for front mowers and tractors.</p>
<p>M-B Companies Circle No. 309, Reader Card</p>	<p>Mechanical Power Brooms. Models include walk-behind (36 inches long, 20-inch diameter poly), and those that can be mounted on tractors, skid-steer loaders, and on a John Deere out-front mower, Model MLT (60 inches long by 25-inch diameter, all steel-welded).</p>
<p>Melroe Circle No. 310, Reader Card</p>	<p>Bobcat Skid-Steer Loaders, 14 models from 16.5 hp, air-cooled gas 440B (600 lbs. load capacity) to 74-hp, liquid-cooled diesel 2410 (2400 lb. load capacity). Full line of attachments.</p>
<p>Mustang Manufacturing Circle No. 311, Reader Card</p>	<p>900 Series Loaders, five models, from 15 to 57.5 hp, 650 to 1,700 lb. lift capacities, single-lever Fast-A-Tach. Full line of attachments.</p>
<p>Power Equip. & Hydra Mac Circle No. 312, Reader Card</p>	<p>Hydra-Mac, Model 1450: hydrostatic, all-gear final drive, 40-hp Cummins diesel engine, two-hand lever control.</p>
<p>Ransomes Circle No. 313, Reader Card</p>	<p>Cushman TurfTrak independent tractor unit with approximately 20 attachments, including rotary boom, slip scoop, chipper/shredder, etc. Three models with Kubota engines from 16.5 to 23.5 hp.</p>
<p>Sweepster Circle No. 314, Reader Card</p>	<p>Hydraulic Drive Sweeper Model LH mounts in place of bucket, requires minimum hydraulic system of 10 gpm at 2,000 psi, measures 6 feet wide by 32 inches in diameter, manual 30-degree angle change, quick-attach.</p>
<p>Thomas Equipment Circle No. 315, Reader Card</p>	<p>Skid-Steer Loaders, 6 models from the T-83 (rated lift capacity 800 lbs., 19.5 hp) to the T-233 HD (rated lift capacity 2,300 lbs., 62 hp). Full line of attachments.</p>
<p>Toyota Circle No. 316, Reader Card</p>	<p>Model SDK10, rated at 1,800-lb. operating load (largest of Toyota 6-model line), 57-hp diesel engine, 12.5-cubic-foot bucket, maximum breakout force of 4,740 lbs., maximum dump height of 120.5 inches.</p>
<p>Trackless Vehicles Ltd. Circle No. 317, Reader Card</p>	<p>MT5 Tractor, Cummins 76 hp to 102 hp diesel, four-wheel drive, hydrostatic transmission. Attachments: plows, blowers, sweeper, spreader, spreader, commercial mowers.</p>
<p>Vermeer Manufacturing Circle No. 318, Reader Card</p>	<p>The V-1850 trencher is full hydrostatic-drive; powered by a Kohler Command overhead valve engine. Depth 0-48"; width 4-10". Good for close quarters; Porta-Bore attachment for sidewalk, driveway boring.</p>
<p>Worksaver Circle No. 319, Reader Card</p>	<p>Rakes. Also Model ULF-246 fork attachment increases versatility of small to mid-size tractors and skid-steer loaders, 2,000-lb. capacity, adjustable 46-inch long, alloy steel forks.</p>

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Circle No. 119 on Reader Inquiry Card



Mulch wisely to get full value

Buying and installing landscape mulch is not an insignificant expense. Use these tips to get full financial and plant nutritional value.

■ Using mulches in maintained landscapes reduces maintenance and improves plant health by retaining moisture and controlling weeds.

Mulches can also add beauty to landscapes. They're available in varying textures and colors.

But buying and installing mulch is not an insignificant expense. Here are some tips from the National Bark & Soil Producers Association (NBSPA) to get the full value of mulch in the landscapes you install or maintain:

Depth of application: 2 to 4 inches for most outdoor applications.

As a soil conditioner: Remove grass and weeds from the bed surface. Loosen the soil with a shovel or spade to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Cover the bed with 4 to 6 inches of aged, shredded mulch and till

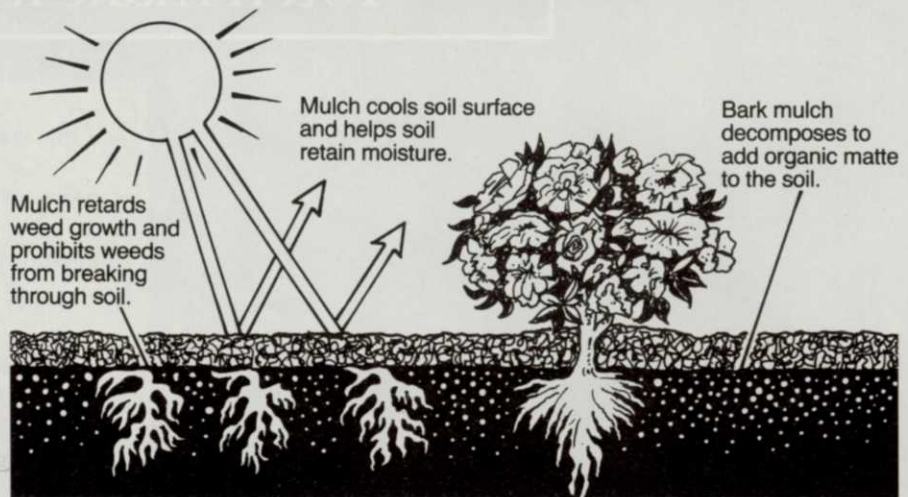


Diagram courtesy Hyponex Corporation

into the soil thoroughly.

Avoid excessive mulch build-up: Re-mulching beds over several years may raise the bed level too high for shrubs and perennials.

When bed depth rises above the base of shrubs, remove 2 to 3 inches of the underlying mulch and save it for other planting uses. The humus created by decomposing bark mulch is an excellent planting medium for pots and planters.

Nitrogen adjustment: Mulches may tie up nitrogen as they decompose.

Gently work a specially formulated fertilizer (like 16-9-12, 18-11-12, or 20-10-10) into the soil before mulching. Fertilizer application rates depend on the type of mulch used.

After mulching, follow recommended fertilizer programs to maintain good plant growth.

Look for low wood content: Bark decomposes slower than wood, maintains its color longer, and presents a uniform product appearance.

MULCH PRODUCT SELECTION GUIDE

	Pine nuggets	Pine mulch	Cypress grade A	Cypress grade B	Hardwood mulch	Western mulch
Characteristics						
Color (1)	red brown	light brown	gold brown	gold brown	dark br/blk	red brown
Longevity (2)	multiple	multiple	single	single	single	single
Moisture retention	low	high	high	high	high	high
particle size	1.25-3.5 in.	<1.5 in.	<3 in.	<3 in.	<3 in.	<1 in.
Wood content (3)	<15%	>15%	<15%	>15%	<15%	>15%
pH	neutral	slightly acid	neutral	neutral	slightly acid	slightly acid
Benefits						
Decoration	excellent	good	excellent	good	good	good
Erosion control	fair	excellent	excellent	good	excellent	excellent
Moisture control	fair	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent
Soil conditioning	fair	excellent	fair	fair	excellent	excellent
Weed control	good	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent
Applications						
Edging	good	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent
Drainage areas	fair	good	good	fair	good	good
Planting beds	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent
Planters	good	good	excellent	good	excellent	excellent
Play areas	fair	excellent	fair	excellent	excellent	excellent
Slopes & grades	good	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent

(1) Color may vary depending on regional tree species.

(2) Longevity is a rating of how long the product substantially maintains its original appearance and/or function. The rating for a single season or multiple season is an average based on a temperate climate and moderately intense sun.

(3) Wood content percentage is measured as a percentage of wood to total product weight.

Source: National Bark & Soil Producers Association

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Circle No. 115 on Reader Inquiry Card

10 ways to KEEP your

customers

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Mr. & Mrs. Geoff and Karen
12502 Brooklawn Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44111

Howard, Jerry
1273 Walnut
Madison, OH 44321
555-1222

Lawn Care: Fertilizer: 4/5; 6/1 Pre-Weed: 3/10
Flower Beds: Weed: 6/3

Steady customers are the backbone of your business. But losing them could break your back.

Like most alert lawn and landscape entrepreneurs, you know how hard it can be to attract new customers. But do you

also do all you can to keep your old reliable "steadies"?

It's often thought that the customers who are the backbone of your business will always be loyal—unless some actual damage is done to his or her lawn or landscape. However, it has been proved that unless such mishaps are really drastic, they will be forgiven when they're corrected.

But what is rarely taken lightly by most

"old" customers—and will often lose them—is the inability to observe some simple, considerate and very easy common-sense business practices. To be sure that you and your employees are careful, check your answers to these "yes" questions:

1) Are your trucks neat, clean and businesslike in appearance? They should be spotless and freshly painted with the name of your company clearly visible. Many customers who employ a lawn/landscape contractor consider having the truck in the driveway to be a status symbol. But even the most loyal customers won't like a shabby, unpainted vehicle looking like a fugitive from a salvage dump in their driveway.

Handling complaints

- Problem customers include those who:
 - never seem to be fully satisfied with the completed work;
 - always seem to want some extra service for free;
 - are sure they're not getting their money's worth; and
 - insist on supervising the work to an annoying degree.

Proven ways to handle such sticky situations successfully include:

Guarantee your work. Offer to make good in any way you can.

You may need to warn the customer that "I'll do this your way, if you insist, but I won't be responsible for the results."

Offer money-back guarantees on any product you sell that is offered to you on the same basis by the supplier or manufacturer. "If you have a receipt and if you use this product according to directions and it doesn't deliver as promised, just tell us exactly where it failed."

Pay attention to details and more details. Let your client know this, even while you are working on the property. This can be extremely impressive, and will make your company and its services look very good indeed.

Offer to match the prices of your competition to customers concerned about prices. These prices should be in writing and include everything the customer has requested. (Ask for proof of a competitor's bargain price on that specific job; they are often only offered infrequently as "loss leader" bait.)

Never forget: it can cost a great deal to replace loyal customers. They are the lifeblood of your business, and your best sales reps. Remind your employees: if the company has no customers, there will be no business—and, consequently—no jobs.

—B.R.M.

2) Are your drivers safe and courteous?

Since your logo is (or should be) printed boldly on your trucks, they and their drivers are really moving advertisements. This makes it especially important to drive carefully and obey all traffic rules.

It's also important for your employees to avoid arguments with a customer's neighbor concerning traffic-related matters. Neglecting to do so can often result in losing a valuable customer—regardless of whether the employee is right or wrong.

3) Do your drivers show courtesy toward other motorists and pedestrians?

Or do they cut people off and then smirk at them? Rude and unnecessary traffic-related practices have a negative impact on the company's reputation.

4) Are your drivers' job-site parking practices considerate?

Do they always park away from driveways and the flow of traffic, or do they cause troublesome traffic jams by parking on busy highways during rush hour?

5) Do your employees wear near and appropriate uniforms?

With their name and company name embroidered on a pocket or on the backs of the shirts? Or do your people look like skid row characters rather than competent and reliable landscape workers because of their unwashed, unkempt hair and ragged and dirty clothes?

6) Do employees cooperate with each other?

Do they work together in harmony, efficiently and quietly, or do they quarrel with each other about who does what, where and how?

7) Are your employees considerate of your customers?

Your answer to this question must be "no" if workers don't bother to:

- * carry empty trash cans from the curb to the garage (or another location designated by the customer) simply because it's too much trouble or they're too busy keeping to their production schedule;

- * bag lawn clippings, pulled weeds and other trash and dispose of it properly and neatly, as directed by the customer. Or (even worse) do they leave it lying around in a pathway or garage?

8) Do you train your workers to be considerate and responsible?

For instance:

- * always moving garden furniture, croquet and other games, children's toys, and similar items on lawns before mowing, and—if appropriate—replacing them;

- * always carefully covering all items which can't be moved before spraying;

- * always neatly coiling and storing hoses near a faucet or some other practical place as designated by the customer, if you are responsible for watering.

LM GRAPEVINE

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT hears through the grapevine that the Professional Grounds Management Society will probably name a permanent executive director at its next Board of Directors meeting. **John Gillan** has been serving as interim executive director since the board decided not to renew **Alan Shulder's** contract in March...

Golf course designers are catching up with superintendents in the environmental arena. In the June 1992 issue of LM we reported on superintendents who provide excellent golfing conditions as they improve habitat for wildlife on their courses. Earlier this year, American Society of Golf Course Architects president **Art Hills** said, "Today, we're working closely with environmentalists to design and build courses that are...havens for all types of wildlife." Funny, **Joe Kosoglov** at Wolf Run and **David Stone** at The Honors Course (and many others) have been looking out for birds and wildlife for years...

The 13-mile-long Monarch Levee ruptured on July 31 and the swollen Missouri River rushed over the Chesterfield Valley in West St. Louis (Mo.) County. The showroom of dealer/distributor Outdoor Equipment Inc. got clobbered, but **Tom Walker** and his staff apparently had time to move equipment to another location on higher ground. LM drove through the valley the day U.S.40 reopened (Aug. 16) and saw the cleanup at Outdoor under way...

A tip of the LM hat to **Trey Rogers** of Michigan State University, leader of the research team that prepared sod for the Pontiac Silverdome prior to international soccer games this

past June. Rogers, **Paul Rieke** and **John Stier** not only created a great playing field, but also garnered positive national press for the green industry. Next summer, the MSU team faces the real test at Pontiac: the opening round of the World Cup...

Professional Applicators await indications of the Clinton administration's views on urban pesticide use. So far, the Prez has had his hands full with things like the budget and health care. **Carol Browner**, appointed EPA's top gun this year, has yet to take a strong stand. "She has continually made statements saying that reduction of pesticides will be a hallmark of the administration," **Allen James** tells LM. "But they've done very little so far." James is executive director of RISE, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, a consortium of pesticide manufacturers, distributors and applicators...

SPORTS TURF GURU **George Toma** says he's taking it easy in semi-retirement, shifting much of his workload to son **Chip**. But he was an excellent host to Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association members earlier this year. He gave TOCA members the grand tour of Royals Stadium, presenting his opinions on everything from synthetic turf to world politics. He also treated TOCA with some door prizes from his vast collection of sports memorabilia. (TOCA executive director **Den Gardner** won an autographed baseball, and LM's **Jerry Roche** took home an official "NFL Ground Crew" Super Bowl cap.)...

READERS! Got an item for "LM Grapevine?" Call us at (216) 826-2830 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Eastern Time.

9) Do you offer your customers more than the usual services?

Sodding, seeding, liming, irrigation and installation work are good examples. This is an important way in which many companies hold their important "steady customers" and keep them loyal as well as generating considerably more trade and profit. You might also put together a complete lawn care program which includes preventive disease control and keeping customers' landscapes looking good all year round.

You may feel that angling for and obtaining such added business isn't worth the trouble, but neglecting to do so carries the

risk of losing "steadies" to the competition—especially when cut-rate fees are offered.

10) Are problem customers handled tactfully?

Smart companies do their utmost to answer complaints (see sidebar). Customers will usually promptly spread the word to others about their experiences. These verbal reports can be negative and result in the loss of a "steady" plus other potential or actual customers. Or they can be positive and have the opposite effect on business.

—The author, *Bess Ritter May*, is a freelance writer specializing in business topics for numerous trade magazines. She is headquartered in Philadelphia, Pa.



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