
General Recommendations for Purchasing and Upkeep of Commercial Landscape Maintenance Equipment

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IN GENERAL...

Equipment is cheap compared to labor (or your time)

Your goal should be to do a high-quality job using a minimal amount of time

Buy the best you can afford (as with any other tool)

Look at and compare relevant characteristics-such as

- 1) Weight-to-power ratio on handheld equipment
- 2) Longevity
- 3) Production capacity
- 4 Ease of maintenance:

can the air filter be removed by hand or do you need tools?

how much trouble is it to remove the blade?

is it easy to check and change the oil?

are parts and repairs easily available?

MOWERS & OTHER POWERED EQUIPMENT

MOWERS

When you're ready to buy a mower, think about the type of properties you expect to be maintaining. The size of these properties will determine the type and size of the mower you should buy. Don't forget to think about physical limitations such as fences and gates. Sometimes it's cheaper to replace a gate than use a 21" mower or weedeater in an enclosed area.

Considerations for a walk-behind mower:

Look for wide, large diameter tires that roll easily on top of thick grass and spread the weight of the mower over a wide area to reduce rutting.

Ask for a test drive, ask about warranty work, ask about parts availability

Cutting height - the mower must be able to cut at least 3.5 - 4 inches for St. Augustine. Measure blade height on concrete, from concrete to the cutting edge of the blade.

How much horsepower is enough? Better to have a little extra than bog down in thick grass. Test it out first.

Zero turn machines - work your way up to these. Every piece of equipment you buy must pay for itself by saving the cost of labor.

EDGERS

Edging is not required for the health of the lawn, it just adds to a neat appearance

Stick edger vs. push edger - stick edger is less dangerous, quicker and easier for edging beds, if you have huge properties with lots of hard edges, you should consider a push edger - easier on you or your employees

WEEDEATERS

Look for low weight to power ratio - consider a bump head with two lines.

Always look for ease of maintenance.

BLOWERS

Look for low weight to power ratio and an easily cleaned air filter.

Always look for ease of maintenance.

SMALL TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

IN GENERAL:

Buy the best quality you can afford

There's an old Italian saying:

"Good things cost less than poor things"

Maintain the tools properly for long life

Brightly colored handles make hand tools easier to find if you lay them down in the grass or shrubbery

SPRAY TANKS - HAND PUMP OR BACK PACK

Are replacement parts such as nozzles, hoses & handles available?

Does it require "original manufacturer" parts or generic parts?

Plastic or stainless steel are better, plain steel will corrode quickly

ALWAYS read the manufacturers instructions

Clean the equipment by spraying with a hose but only after the mower cools - otherwise the cold water could crack the engine block, etc

ALWAYS disconnect the spark plug when working on any mower

DON'T use alcohol / ethanol enriched gas in your equipment especially the 2-cycle equipment. Alcohol is not compatible with some of the components of the fuel system like o-rings and other rubber-like and plastic-like components. Over time, these components soften and shrink.

Equipment not used often will suffer the worst damage sensitive components spend a lot of time soaking in the cause problems and cost you money.

because the fuel. Eventually it will

DON'T try to clean spark plugs, any loose particles left over from cleaning could ruin your engine. Spark plugs are cheap compared to engines

DO:

- Check the oil on a regular basis - at least daily
- Check the cooling system - remove debris from the air intake screen and engine shroud
- Clean out grass buildup under the deck
- Keep blades balanced and sharp
- Check the safety switches-fix 'em don't disconnect 'em.
- Check the brake and wheel drive adjustments regularly
- Check the air pressure in your tires often-this is the leading cause of an uneven cut
- Check and clean the air filter often especially in the spring and the fall when the weather dries out and mowing stirs up more sand.
- Grease often if not daily - You'll wear out parts more often if you don't.
- Inspect belts and chains on a regular basis-keep spares on the truck
- Check spark plugs and fuel filters, replace as necessary, they're cheap compared with repair

MAINTENANCE OF SMALL TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

IN GENERAL:

- Rinse them when they're dirty
- Sharpen them when they're dull
- Oil or grease them occasionally and especially after they've gotten wet

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