

Compact

Product Spotlight

Utility Tractors

by Bob Tracinski

Maintaining playing fields and surrounding park grounds is an ideal application for compact utility tractors (CUTs). The versatile machines mow, dig, till, and move materials, and they can grade, level, and smooth play areas.

Not every CUT is the same. They all share the same multi-purpose utility, but different CUTs have distinct capabilities that make them particularly suitable for individual jobs. Taking time to determine what size CUT is best for you is the first step in making a worthwhile investment.

Factors to consider

Most manufacturers offer both gear and hydrostatic transmissions. Hydrostatic transmission has generally been a better choice if tasks require a front-end loader. It allows you to shift easily from forward to reverse without a clutch.

Ergonomics is also an important factor. A comfortable work station reduces operator fatigue on long jobs. It increases morale and productivity.

Available attachments will also factor into your choice of CUT. Most machines include a front-end loader. Mowers, rotary cutters, box scrapers, backhoes, and rear blades are some other popular attachments. Tillers, cultivators, rotary brooms, harrows, posthole diggers, flail mowers, and snow blowers are also available.

Material collection systems are common in many grounds maintenance applications where clippings can't be left on the turf. A CUT with a rotary mower and a material collection system can make short work of time-consuming, labor-intensive jobs.

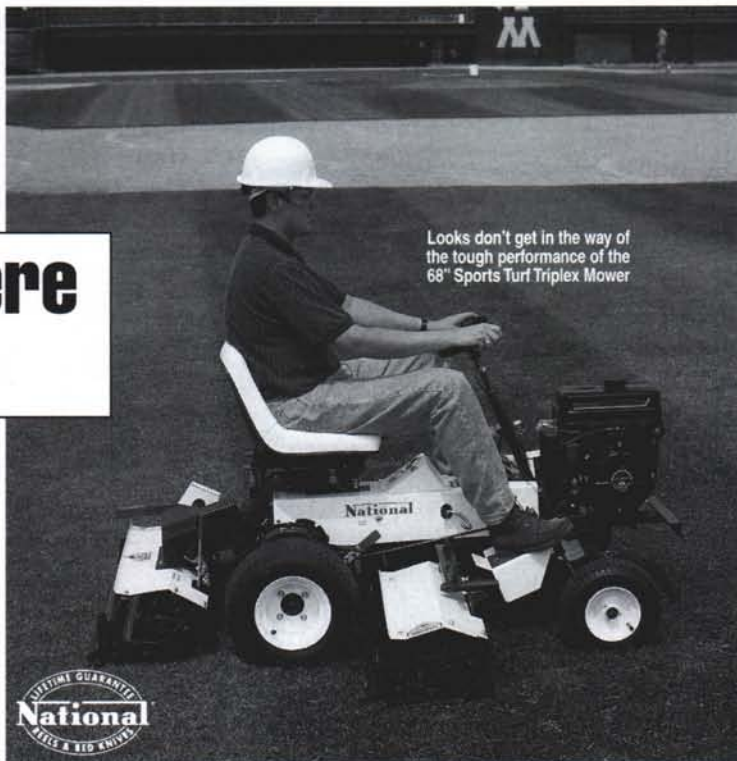
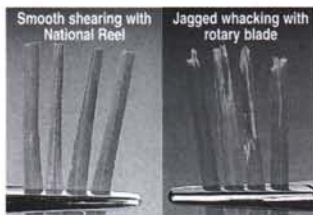
The bigger the better?

Your horsepower needs depend on the kinds of attachments you typically use. A

20-horsepower CUT can operate a 60-inch rotary mower, but to operate a 60-inch rotary tiller or heavy-duty turf aerator, your CUT will need to be at least 30 horsepower. For operations that require you to use two or three attachments at once, a 40-horsepower CUT may be needed.

CUTs with high horsepower support larger attachments. They generally perform jobs significantly faster than smaller models. Operating at the same ground speed, a seven-foot mower designed for a 30-horsepower CUT will cut grass about 40-percent faster than a five-foot mower on a 20-horsepower CUT.

Increased power doesn't necessarily equal increased output. The size that fits your needs will be determined by the amount of work you have to do, the size of individual jobs, physical locations, variety of attachments, and speed. □



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