



Lighter on the turf and the wallet

BY JIM GRIBBLE

Lighter is better. That's the new mantra among manufacturers of major equipment for the turf industry. The trend began with mowers and over the past few years has begun to influence vehicle design.

Today's utility vehicles, large and small, are built for a lighter footprint and a softer ride. Those imperatives have led to development of an entirely new category of lightweight work vehicles that borrow engineering from their heavy-duty cousins and handle many of the same chores. They're great for moving people, equipment and small loads of material. Their lower cost per unit appeals particularly to operators purchasing large fleets or expanding existing ones.

All of the major manufacturers have targeted this niche, with several new products hitting the market within the past year. "There's been a shift toward these vehicles because, for what you used to spend per unit on heavy-duty vehicles, you can buy a larger fleet," says Larry Jones, vehicles product manager for Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products.

For example, Textron has made improvements to the Jacobsen 1110 Hauler. Like all other Textron, it features two-stage air filtration that uses vortex technology to remove larger particles before they get to the primary air cleaner. "The two-stage system improves engine serviceability and longevity," Jones says.

Feature show

Manufacturers also are striving to improve comfort, convenience and ride to meet end-user needs. Some lightweight vehicles have sprung suspensions and constant-velocity transmissions. Walk-through operator stations allow egress from the right or left. Jones says you can also add an electric bed lift—something that used to be seen only on the larger vehicles.

The thinking that led to lightweight vehicles has driven many of the recent improvements in heavy-duty machines. Among buyers who emphasize long-term value and performance, demand for heavy-duty vehicles remains robust, thanks to a different set of virtues: ease of use, productivity, reliability, and durability. "They're great when you're shorthanded for labor and need to get the absolute most out of a machine," Jones said. "And you generally can count on them lasting many years. Some of our heavy-duty vehicles have been in service for decades and are still on the job."

For increased efficiency and long-term reliability, electronic fuel injection is now standard on most gasoline-powered, heavy-duty vehicles from Cushman. Also standard are automatic transmissions manufactured to automobile-industry standards. In emphasizing automatic over manual-shift models, the company took into account that most American cars are automatics. According to Jones, fewer young people are learning to drive manual-shift cars, and so they need special training to run manual-shift utility vehicles.

Peter Whurr, vice president of product management for Textron Golf and Turf, said the market continues to evolve. "We pay extremely close attention to feedback from end users," Whurr said. "Superintendents and groundskeepers, along with legislation, are driving the evolution in utility vehicle design."

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This article was written by Jim Gribble of Nelson Schmidt, Milwaukee.

Maintaining the Grounds



NEW BRIGGS & STRATTON ENGINE FOR HAND-HELDS

Briggs & Stratton has introduced its Fource™ 4-cycle engine for strong trimmers and other outdoor, hand-held applications. The 4-cycle technology offers easier starting and maintenance, more power, and cleaner operation than 2-cycle engines, says the company.

A patent pending lube system allows the 4-cycle technology on hand-helds; it provides 360-degree intermittent operation and 270-degree continuous operation, so important for hand-held equipment. The company says exhaust emissions are reduced 70 percent compared to typical 2-cycle engines.

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PROFESSIONAL SOD CUTTER

The Turfco Direct KisCutter is simple, durable, and easy to use, says the manufacturer. The lightest sod cutter on the market, KisCutter makes loading and unloading easier because its handle transforms for lifting and hauling, as low as less than 32 inches.

Simple operation; squeeze the throttle and off you go; release it and the 140-lb. unit stops. A centrifugal clutch, friction drive to the wheels and variable throttle make starts and stops and corners easy, says Turfco.

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TORO'S WORKMAN® 1100

The Toro Co.'s new Workman 1100 (12 hp) offers improved traction and ride provided by a unique Active In-Frame™ suspension, which allows all vehicle tires to

remain on the ground and to twist easier over rough terrain. The Workman 1100 is the second of Toro's mid-duty vehicles and combined with the Workman 2100 (16 hp) the duo are the most powerful mid-duty vehicles in their class, says Toro.

Additional features include corrosion and dent resistant hood and bed, multiple integrated storage areas, and a 12-hp pedal start Kohler® Command Pro™ engine. Floation tires come standard on the Workman and it offers the highest payload capacity of its class.

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ALL-PURPOSE CRAWLER MACHINE

ASV Inc. (All Season Vehicles) has introduced its RC•30 all-surface loader, which the company says weighs 3,000 lbs. but impacts the earth with a ground pressure no more than that of a 5-year-old child, because of the unit's patented rubber track undercarriage. ASV is an affiliate of Caterpillar.

ASV spent 2 years developing the RC•30, which they say is a machine that is small and maneuverable yet driven by a seated operator, and powerful and stable yet gentle to turf. The unit's weight is transferred to the ground through 24 wheeled contact points on the inside of the rubber tracks.

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Maintaining the Grounds



CLUB CAR'S CARRYALL 2 PLUS

This unit sports a 351cc, 11-hp gasoline, key-start engine that can do 18 mph and hauls up to 1,200 lbs. total vehicle load. Durability. Versatility. Power. Club Car vehicles make a wide range of chores easier to perform in less time because of their durability, versatility, and power, says the manufacturer. They can haul practically anything, from lumber and piping to plants and shrubs. The lightweight aluminum construction enables users to work in rugged sites while not damaging turf.

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JOHN DEERE'S TURF GATOR

The John Deere Turf Gator is designed for quiet operation, a larger cargo bed and faster speeds (maximum speed 18 mph). It is equipped with a 44- x 49- x 9-in. cargo bed with a 500-lb. payload capacity. Noise levels on the Turf Gator have been reduced through: an engine and exhaust system that are isolated from the frame and chassis; a new large volume muffler designed to reduce noise; new barriers and sound absorbers; and the ground speed governor and starter generator. And marks on turf are minimized due to the vehicle's low ground pressure and a low center of gravity.

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