

Buying A Greens Mower

For the homeowner or small operation croquet court owner, the cost of a new greens mower can break the bank. A new mower with a floating head, from a major manufacturer in the golf industry, will run in the neighborhood of \$13,000. A fixed-head model, which is really the only kind needed for a croquet court, will run in the \$9,000 to \$11,000 neighborhood. In this article we will look at the options that are available to the homeowner and other small operations.

What's Out There

In the United States, there are three major manufacturers of powered walk-behind greens mowers: John Deere, Jacobsen and Toro. Most of the greens mowers are offered in 22-inch wide models. To a lesser degree, McLane offers an alternative to the major companies. For the human-powered mower, there are two alternatives: McLane and Hudson Star. The Hudson Star can be set to 1/8 inch (an 11-blade reel @ 3-4 cuts per inch), whereas the McLane (a 10-blade reel) will only go to 1/4 inch. Both cut approximately to a 16-inch width.

For my yard, since I have a croquet court and golf green with a fringe, I need two heights of cut, 7/32 inch and 1/2 inch. The general lawn mower, set at 1-3/4 inch, is a separate story. Trying to change the height of cut on any reel mower, every time the mower is used, from one section of grass to another, is a task in itself. Two mowers is a far better solution. In my case I own a McLane push mower set at 1/2 inch and an older Toro Greensmaster set at 7/32 inch. For the general lawn I use a 72-inch Locke Triplex reel mower.¹

¹ I have used reel mowers in my yard for years, because in Kennebunkport the grass is never dry. Rotary mowers would always clog and limit the time at which one could mow. Reel mowers would always work in wet, dewy conditions.



Figure 1 A 22" Jacobsen Greens King 500.



Figure 3 A 22" Toro Greensmaster with transport wheels.



Figure 2 A 22" John Deere hybrid greens mower with electric reel drive.



Figure 4 A McLane 17-inch, 10-blade hand push mower with grass catcher. McLane also makes powered mowers



Figure 5 A Hudson-Star 16-inch, 11-blade hand push mower with grass catcher.

Buying New

All the mowers pictured above can be bought as new machines. Dealerships would be delighted to sell you one. Because a croquet court is perfectly flat, there is no necessity to buy a mower with a floating head for \$12,000. Jacobsen sells two models of fixed heads called the Greens King 500 in both 22-inch and 26-inch at \$9,500 and \$10,600, respectively. Toro sells the Greensmaster 1000, a 21-inch fixed head, for about \$10,100. John Deere sells a 22-inch and a 26-inch fixed head, walk greens mowers for \$8,337 and \$9,432. McLane sells their 20" self propelled, walk-

behind mower for \$1,650; smaller and larger models also for less and more. Hudson Star has only one hand model at \$1,645.

One can spend a tidy sum of money for new mower. I never felt as though that was ever in the budget for my home court. When I first built my court, I contacted Ernie Hawkes at the Gorham Country Club. Ernie had a large maintenance barn with a load of used equipment and mowers. In addition, he had an area where all machinery could be maintained. I bought a used Jacobsen mower from Ernie with a finicky 2-cycle engine that would start only after a great deal of energy had been expended. The Gorham Country club maintained this mower for years and eventually put on a 4-cycle Briggs and Stratton engine that made mowing a comparative pleasure.

When the Jacobsen finally died after many years, with failed castings, it was time to research buying another used mower. A new mower was still not in the budget. Fortunately for me, the Arundel Golf Course (the summer golf home of the



Figure 6 Peter Rumery, chief mechanic at the Cape Arundel Golf Course, standing in a brand new workshop in front of a reel grinder.

George Bush clan) sits only a stone's throw from my house. It was a former course superintendent at that club who helped me with *A Guide to Croquet Court Planning, Building & Maintenance*,² so I felt comfortable reacquainting myself with the maintenance crew. My questions to them were what mower would they

recommend, where should I buy it, and would they maintain it for me?

As I learned quickly, many golf courses have big budgets and they continually buy new equipment that turns over rapidly. Evidently they can't be bothered with

² *A Guide to Croquet Court Planning, Building & Maintenance* was originally published in 1991. A new edition is on the way.

higher maintenance costs and want near perfection in performance. Many golf courses lease equipment for three years and when it is returned to the distributing company it is then put on the market as used equipment. Cape Arundel will sometimes do a five-year lease-to-own which after a useful life, will be traded in. So the used market has a myriad of quality mowers, priced very reasonably as a result. In the appendix, you will find many dealerships from around the country, most of whom will carry good used mowers. If possible, strike a deal with the dealership that sold you the mower, because there is maintenance required for proper function that only they (or perhaps a golf course) could provide.

Some tasks such as changing the oil, back lapping and other minor adjustments are easy enough for some to perform, but sharpening the bed knife and



Figure 7 A bedknife sharpening machine. Courtesy of Cape Arundel Golf Course.

the reels take special equipment. So, as a word of advice, make friends with your golf course superintendent and the chief maintenance mechanic. He will be your best friend. Your court will never look so good as when your mower has been professionally sharpened and

maintained.

Buying Used

The crew at Cape Arundel Golf Course answered my questions about buying a used mower. They suggested I go online to Turf Products Inc. (Fig. 8) to see what they had for used Toro mowers. Cape Arundel's preference in mowers happened to be Toro and they had the machinery to service them. Since Turf Products Inc. deals

almost exclusively with the golf industry (with croquet being a mere hiccup), it made sense to order a Toro mower from them while having it delivered directly to Cape Arundel Golf Course. With their taking delivery, I knew that they would inspect it before it came off the truck. As part of superb service, Peter Rumery, the chief mechanic, put on a new bedknife and sharpened and adjusted the mower. With a Kawasaki engine, the performance was superb. As an additional bonus, Peter offered to take my old mower and dispose of it.

Nearly all golf course equipment dealers have used mowers for sale. For the needs of a croquet court owner, a fixed, non-articulating head, should be the first choice. Used mowers range in price from \$7000 to under \$1000. The mowers

Used Equipment							
Item #	Equipment	Hrs	Year	Condition	Price As Is	Price Winter Service	Details & Contact
Walk Greensmowers							
4009472TCAU	FLEX 21 14 blade 4 in stk	871	2011	Good	\$3550.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
76521EU	FLEX 21, 14 blade, 2 in stk	746	2003	Fair	\$3200.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
2745AU	FLEX 21, 11 blade 2 in stk		2003	Fair	\$1900.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
4013236TCAU	FLEX 18 / 11 BLD (QTY 5)	1320	2009	GOOD	\$1400.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
4014366TCDU	FLEX 18 / 11 BLD	560	2010	GOOD	\$2400.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
159165000PNAU	Greens Master 1000 14 in stk	685& up	2011	GOOD	\$2200.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
4010624TANU	GREENSMASER 1000/ 11 BLD (QTY 2)	521	2010	GOOD	\$3300.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
77154AU	GREENSMASER 1000		2113	GREAT	\$7100.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
77154CU	GREENSMASER 1000		2013	GREAT	\$7100.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
77154DU	GREENSMASER 1000		2013	GREAT	\$7100.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
008-0566497TCGU-HU	Greensmaster 1000 2 in stk	776	2010	Good	\$1200.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
12696U	Greensmaster 800 / 11 blade		2000	Good	\$2000.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us
77934EU	TORO GREENSMASER 500 3 in stk			GOOD	\$1500.00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Image & Details • Contact Us

Figure 8 Typical used equipment page from a dealership.

marked "GREAT" will need little or no work other than the normal maintenance. Those marked "FAIR" will own significant hours and need some sort of work to get them up to performance standards. The mowers offered by the dealerships will be trade-ins of mowers that have reached their end-of-life with the owner, or lease-end mowers (usually 2, 3, or 4 years old) where the lessee opts not to buy. Fortunately there are many options. That's not to say that a good deal might not be found on Craig's List or eBay. Be careful though, and if possible have it inspected by a mechanic who knows this kind of machinery before you buy. Most of the dealership mowers will be in some sort of working order unless specified. They will be your best bet.

Leasing

There are two kinds of leases, the Capital Lease and the Fair Market Value Lease. Direct Capital of Portsmouth, NH explained it best:

A Capital Lease (sometimes called a Finance, Nominal, Buck-Out or Dollar-Buyout Lease) provides a fixed monthly payment during the life of lease. The most distinguishing feature, however, is the option to purchase the equipment for a nominal price at the end of the term – sometimes for as little as a dollar. The whole "Dollar-Buyout" nickname is making more sense now, isn't it?

A Fair Market Value lease (sometimes called a True Lease or an Operating Lease) generally has lower monthly payments than a Capital Lease or a bank loan and it's most often used as a shorter-term lease than a Capital Lease. It's usually best used for purchases of equipment that is high-tech or fast-changing like software or computer equipment. At the end of the term, the lessee most often returns the equipment to the lessor or in some cases is granted the option to purchase the equipment at "fair market value."³

From a tax standpoint the FMV lease payments can be written off 100% as an operating expense because it is not a purchase. A Capital Lease puts the lessee as the

³ Alex Myers, "The Difference Between FMV and Capital Leases Explained," September 4, 2012. <http://blog.directcapital.com/business-insights/finance-lending/fair-market-value-and-capital-leases/> Direct Capital, by coincidence, is where my oldest son worked for many years.

purchaser and has the mower as an asset on the balance sheet. Thus, the payments are higher because the lessee is paying 100% of the equipment costs.

John Parent, territory manager for John Deere Golf, prepared some leasing arrangements based on today's price of \$8,337.00 for a 220SL fixed head mower.

Lease-purchase lease: you own it at the end of the lease.

1 year = \$710.00 per month X12 payments
2 years = \$363.00 per month X24 payments.
3 years = \$247.00 per month X36 payments.
4 years = \$190.00 per month X48 payments.
5 years = \$155.00 per month X60 payments.

Operating lease: unit is returned to the lessor.

1 year = \$641.00 per month X12 payments.
2 years = \$340.00 per month X24 payments.
3 years = \$225.00 per month X36 payments.
4 years = \$175.00 per month X48 payments.
5 years = \$143.00 per month X60 payments.

Most of the major manufacturers and distributors will have similar programs. According to Robert Hobbs of Turf Products, Inc., a rough estimate for a Toro Greensmaster four-year FMV (Fair Market Value) lease would be around \$2,500 per year. Although an individual court owner may decide to lease a new mower, it is something more likely to occur with a larger facility or a club where tax advantages may come into play and performance is a must. For a homeowner court, this may be too much to ask, and a purchase of a used mower may be a better solution.

Conclusion

There are several options available for the purchase of powered, walk-behind greensmowers. As for push mowers, there are only a few options, most likely ones that involve buying new. For the most part, buying used makes sense and this premise resides in the fact that mowers for smaller applications won't get a whole lot of use and, therefore, not a lot of wear and maintenance costs. But much will

depend upon your budget, your mowing area, your mowing frequency, the availability of professional maintenance and the performance you desire. With that, I wish you all GOOD LUCK!

Dr. Carleton Mabee

Dr. Mabee is once again the Chairman of the Courts and Greens Committee of the USCA. He is the author of numerous articles concerning courts and grass and the author of the book *A Guide to Croquet Court Planning, Building & Maintenance*, originally published in 1991 and is now being revised. Questions for Dr. Mabee can be addressed by email: cmabee@roadrunner.com.

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Phone: 602-442-4653
Fax: 602-474-4933
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Nancy Paulus
Sales Manager: Mark Clark
Service Manager: Chris Krause
E-mail: twhelan@textron.com
Website:
www.jacobsenwest.com

Jacobsen West

560 S. Promenade Avenue,
Suite 101
Corona, CA 92879
Phone: (951) 272-2255 or
(877) 448-9727
Fax: (951) 272-2115
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Oscar del
Campo
Sales Manager: Rick Danielson
Service Manager: Dave Morton

Jacobsen West

361 N. Andreasen Dr.
Escondido, CA 92025
Phone: 760-300-3333
Fax: 760-745-0167
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Rosie Solis
Sales Manager: Rick Danielson
Service Manager: Dave Morton

Jacobsen West

79-833 Country Club Dr.
Bermuda Dunes, CA 92203
Phone: 760-200-0098
Fax: 760-200-0844
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Delia Cardenes
Sales Manager: Mike Diaz
Service Manager: Dave Morton

Jacobsen West

561 West Sunset Rd.
Henderson, NV 89011
Phone: (702) 642-8656
Fax: (702) 642-3812
Principal Contact: Jaime Ovalle
Parts Manager: Joel Danielson
Sales Manager: Jaime Ovalle
E-mail: jovalle@textron.com
Website:

www.jacobsenwest.com

Jacobsen West

28300 Industrial Blvd., Suite A
Hayward, CA 94545
Phone: 510-887-7022
Fax: 951-272-2114
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Oscar del Campo
Sales Manager: Rick Danielson
Service Manager: Jason Gonzalez

Jacobsen West

1060 National Drive Suite 1
Sacramento, CA 95834
Phone: 916-419-2000
Fax: 916-419-2065
Principal Contact: Tony Whelan
Parts Manager: Oscar del Campo
Sales Manager: Rick Danielson
Service Manager: Jason Gonzalez

RMT Equipment

4225 South 500 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-2100
Fax: (801) 262-9740
Principal Contact: Brent Bonham, Brandon Bonham
Parts Manager: Bret Mather
Service Manager: Bryan Holmes
E-mail:

brandon@rmtequipment.com
; lud@rmtequipment.com

Website:

www.rmtequipment.com

RMT Equipment

1696 Bishop Rd.
Chehalis, WA 98532

Phone: (360) 748-3110

RMT Equipment

935 NW Corporate Center Drive
Troutdale, OR 97060
Phone: 503-667-5000
Fax: 503-667-5002

RMT Equipment

3113 East Main St.
Lewiston, ID 83501
Phone: (208) 743-4571
Fax: (208) 743-4572

John Deere

CAZENOVIA EQUIPMENT CO.,INC.

809 E GENESEE ST
CHITTENANGO NY 130371327
<http://www.cazenoviaequipme...>

3156873309
3156875295

LaCorte Farm & Lawn Equipment, Inc.

522 EDWARDS AVE
CALVERTON NY 119331636
<http://www.lacorteequipment...>

6317278700
6317271825

J. W. Turf, Inc.

29321 GARRISON RD
WIXOM MI 483932326
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2484460397
2484460397

J. W. Turf, Inc.
717 MAIN ST
ALLENTON WI 530029565
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8476834653
8476833978

JW TURF, INC
14 N 937 US HWY 20
HAMPSHIRE IL 60140
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8476834653
8476833978

P & K Equipment, Inc.
4385 W 520
PRYOR OK 743613294
www.pkequipment.com
9188248541
9188242103

P & K Equipment, Inc.
11518 E 66TH ST N
OWASSO OK 740553932
www.pkequipment.com
9184373193
9184370667

P & K EQUIPMENT, INC.
5029 SE 44TH ST
NORMAN OK 730729715
www.pkequipment.com
4053215439
4053646891

P & K Equipment, Inc.
604 EASTGATE ST

STILLWATER OK 740746540
www.pkequipment.com
4057434050
4057434089

Stotz Equipment
352 Blackmore Road
Evansville WY 82636
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
3072651870
3072658634

Stotz Equipment
1625 W MAIN ST
TREMONTON UT 843379332
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
4352575231
4352573059

Stotz Equipment
6361 DEAN MARTIN DR
LAS VEGAS NV 891183842
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
7022634512
7022634514

Stotz Equipment
11111 W MCDOWELL RD
AVONDALE AZ 853925000
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
6239367131
6239362089

Stotz Equipment
4811 BROOKS ST
MONTCLAIR CA 917634733
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
9096268586
9096263767

Stotz Equipment
1830 MISSION RD
ESCONDIDO CA 920291112
<http://www.stotzequipment.c...>
7607372400
7607372409

Belkorp Ag, LLC
2413 CROWS LANDING RD
MODESTO CA 953586109
<http://sjequip.com/>
2095383831
2095389220

Belkorp Ag, LLC
1486 S STATE HIGHWAY 59
MERCED CA 953416936
<http://sjequip.com/>
2097228031
2097221677

McLane

McLane is a small company in the Los Angeles area that manufactures less expensive, but good quality mowers, both powered and hand operated. McLane claims that their mowers are available at stores like Home Depot and Lowe's, Ace and True Value Hardware and on-line at Amazon although I have not been able to confirm this. You can buy direct from them McLane Mowers, 7110 East Rosecrans Avenue, Paramount, CA 90723: (562) 633-8158; email address orders@mclanemower.com; website: mclanemower.com.

Hudson Star

Hudson Star manufactures a good quality hand mower in Indiana from a small company. It is available through the distributors listed below or from the manufacturer directly: sales@hudsonstar.com or call (765)-364-0863.

Putting-Greens.com LLC
Newburyport, MA 01950
www.putting-greens.com

People Powered Machines
www.peoplepoweredmachines.com

Clean Air Gardening LC
Dallas, TX 75204
www.cleanairgardening.com

Reel Mower Warehouse
Ft. Wayne, IN
www.reelmowerwarehouse.com

Reel Mowers, Etc.
www.reelmowersetc.com