

2013 GIE+EXPO – Charrge!



Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

Regardless of what you think you know about battery-powered equipment . . .you will ☒ have electric units on your trailers. Probably sooner rather than later.

Keep reading and I think you will see why.

Battery-powered landscape equipment was one of the most noticeable trends at the recently ended 2013 GIE+EXPO. Had a Martian been dropped onto the mammoth EXPO hall floor he could have hardly been blamed for thinking that the landscape/lawn service industry was powered equally by compact, colorful, easily replaceable battery packs and shiny, squat liquid-fueled engines.

He would have been wrong, of course. The industry remains solidly wed to engines fueled by gasoline, propane and clean diesel. That's not going to change; and not for a long time, assuming it ever does.

Even so, even the most experienced contractors attending the EXPO had to have been surprised, if not impressed, with the proliferation of new and "improved" battery-powered landscape equipment on display there.

More dense, more power

The most obvious reason, of course, is improved battery technology. Practically forgotten are the first generations of rechargeable batteries – nickel-cadmium (NiCd) and nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) – in favor of lithium-ion (LiOn) and now lithium ion phosphate (LiFePo4) batteries that offer longer life and higher voltages in ever-smaller, ever-lighter packages. Making these LiOn units even more attractive in our fast-paced, mobile work environment are improved motor performance, product design and the convenience of rapid battery change-out and portable recharging.

For the most part, manufacturers and suppliers of electric units at the GIE+EXPO kept the hype to a minimum. They realize that contractors are, by

nature (and often by bitter experience) loath to open their wallets to unfamiliar technology.

Instead they promoted the advantages of their battery-powered offerings – quiet operation, no fuel costs, less maintenance, ease of operation and no emissions.

Why wouldn't contractors have at least some battery-powered equipment (and perhaps even mowers) on their trailers, especially if they maintain properties, such as HOA's, condos, retirement communities and similar sites where noise or emissions could be an issue?

Battery-powered stand-on

Why indeed, questioned Joe Conrad at the GIE+EXPO, as he touted the benefits of electric (battery-powered) commercial mowers? Conrad is CEO of [Mean Green Products, LLC](#), Hamilton, Ohio. His company manufactures a growing line of mowers powered by the latest generation of LiFePo4 Lithium Energy Modules (LEMs).

While Mean Green isn't the first company with battery-powered zero-turn units (Hustler and Cub Cadet beat it to the punch), it is the first supplier to market them so aggressively to the commercial landscape market.

At this year's GIE+EXPO Conrad pulled the cover off of the STALKER, the industry's first stand-on/walk-behind electric mower. He said that the unit, with its 48-inch cut, can mow for up to five hours on its LEMs, which can be swapped out in a matter of minute so that an operator will hardly miss a beat. The LEMs and electric motor provide 350 ft./lbs. of torque per drive wheel. He said that this competes (or exceeds) in available horsepower with commercial gas mowers in its class.

The STALKER borrows its motors and controllers from the company's CXR zero-turn unit, introduced at a previous GIE+EXPO. While the STALKER is constructed with a 7-gauge steel chassis and a welded steel deck, its design with angular bends and lightening holes (borrowed from the aerospace industry) make it light yet remarkably strong, according to the company.

Conrad said the unit, which because of its 48-inch cut, is ideal for small areas, can save contractors as much as \$6 an hour in fuel costs.

Keep reading *Turf* magazine and *Turf enews* for continued and more comprehensive reporting on electric landscape maintenance equipment. There's a lot more to share with you from the 2013 GIE+EXPO.

(Pictured: Joe Conrad demonstrating the camo version of the STALKER stand-on/walk-behind electric mower from Mean Green Products. It is also available in "mean green.")