

Assessing The Value Of Autonomous Mowers

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'T'. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is positioned above the letter 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word "Services".The logo for DesignBuild, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is positioned above the letter 'i' in "Design". A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word "Build".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word.

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There is no denying emerging technologies have the potential to disrupt and reinvent the way businesses are run. Innovation, after all, is the key to driving industries forward. But it can be difficult to discern what's worth the investment – both time and money – when each new tool, platform and product comes with lofty promises and limited proof points. And the landscaping industry is no exception. With autonomous and robotic mowers dominating industry shows and news headlines, it seems like the future will inevitably be a little more hands-free. But do these products drive value now or are they simply shiny concepts behind glass displays?

Enter Cub Cadet. Moving beyond concepts and controlled demos, Cub Cadet set out to shift the value proposition of autonomous technology from a future promise to a functional product that landscapers can benefit from today. In September 2021, Cub Cadet introduced a new chapter in true landscaping innovation with the first GPS operated semi-autonomous commercial mowers. The [Cub Cadet PRO Series PRO Z 960 S and 972 S SurePath](#) units are outfitted with GPS technology and an exclusive four-wheel steering system that provide a semi-autonomous experience designed to maximize efficiency and productivity while minimizing effort and training. The operator simply needs to set the preliminary cut line, and the SurePath units will perform straight cutting paths with an auto-zero-turn at the end of each row with the touch of a button.

“The priority when developing our autonomous roadmap was to ensure we were delivering tangible value to landscapers at each and every phase,” says Josh Sooy, Director, Professional Business Segment, Cub Cadet. “We see SurePath technology as the ultimate efficiency tool right now. Landscapers can look forward to time back in their day or substantial time saved to take on new jobs, projects, or clients.”



Utilizing high precision GPS technology, SurePath reduces overlap and cuts perfect stripes, allowing the operator to complete a property in a fraction of the time while producing superior cut quality. A valuable advantage select landscapers were able to experience last season.

“Guys in my position are always looking for ways to save money and time, and SurePath has helped us do that,” says Jason Stewart, Ground Superintendent, Brickyard Crossing. “Right away we noticed the efficiency of the mower. It would take much less time to finish an area, freeing up the operator to go around and do string trimming or touch on details we couldn’t do before.”

MINIMIZING EFFORT AND TRAINING

Like other industries, post-pandemic labor shortages have plagued landscaping businesses, forcing owners to delay jobs or outright turn away new clients. The lack of skilled labor means more time and resources are being diverted to training new hires who lack experience operating larger commercial mowers, resulting in reduced productivity and poor cut quality.

Because of the semi-autonomous nature of the GPS technology, every single operator, from new hires to landscaping vets, can be expected to deliver

consistent quality cuts and efficient operation when using a SurePath unit.

“Cub Cadet’s SurePath technology enables even the most inexperienced operators to quickly rival and even surpass the speed and cut quality of experienced landscaping professional,” says Sooy. “Not only does this mean greater overall productivity and efficiency for landscaping businesses, but also a lower risk of turf damage and unhappy customers.”

Plus, the simple and intuitive user experience helps lower the learning curve, reduces the time necessary to train new landscapers and ensures consistent straight lines no matter the operator.

REDUCING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL FATIGUE

Beyond efficiency, cut quality and an intuitive user experience, SurePath represents a new era in ride comfort for operators. By automating the turning and steering, the GPS technology helps reduce hand-arm vibrations, manual inputs and the need for sustained concentration. As a result, landscapers will have more time and energy to devote to other high-priority tasks and projects.

“Reducing operator physical and mental fatigue is a business priority for many landscapers looking to increase workforce productivity and satisfaction,” says Sooy. “Similar to the way current self-driving technology in the auto industry has made parallel parking easier and long drives less draining, SurePath gives operators the confidence to mow perfect stripes without the stress and effort typically required to achieve said perfection.”



While not every innovation or technology comes with the assurance of strength and quality, SurePath delivers on both. Built on the trusted PRO Z 960 S and PRO Z 972 S platforms, the SurePath units are outfitted with a 16CC transmission, 26-inch rear tires and a high performance FX1000v Kawasaki® engine, and are backed by a 3-year no hour limit warranty or a 5-year 1,750-hour limited deck warranty.

Emerging technologies are vital to driving the landscape industry forward, but only if they serve to benefit the businesses that choose to invest in them. [Cub Cadet's SurePath technology](#) represents an exciting new chapter in landscaping innovation and autonomy, but more importantly it is one that delivers tangible value to landscapers looking to up their business today.