



FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE

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Why the World's Largest College Campus Keeps Buying More Grasshoppers

BY GRASSHOPPER

Known as the largest college campus in the world, Berry College in Mount Berry, Ga., is a nature lover's paradise. Vast forests, wetlands and streams are scattered throughout the 27,000-acre campus. There is also an enormous amount of turfgrass to be managed.

"We keep around 250 acres mowed and maintained," says Mitch Davis, grounds superintendent at Berry College.

Grasshopper mowers have been helping cut quite a few of those acres. In fact, it was a professional landscape company that first sparked Berry College's interest in Grasshopper. That company had been hired to help keep up with all the mowing around campus.

"They ran Grasshoppers and were always bragging on the quality of the mower, the service and support, and the convenience of having a reliable dealer nearby," says Phillip Chastain, shop supervisor at Berry College. "So we invited Grasshopper in for a demo.

We liked the mowers, and we really liked the price. We decided we'd be crazy if we didn't at least try one."

After trying out a FrontMount™ model for a year, Chastain says everyone on the Berry College grounds crew was sold on the Grasshopper brand. Berry College's mower fleet now includes six Grasshopper machines, all purchased over the past few years:

- 900D FrontMount with diesel engine and 72" deck
- 325D MidMount™ with diesel engine and 61" deck
- 329B MidMount with gas engine, 61" deck, and PowerVac™ Collection System
- Two 440B MidMounts with EFI

(electronic fuel injection) gas engines and 61" decks

- SO26 OutStander® Stand-On™ with gas engine and 52" deck

Choosing the right mower for the application

Grande Dinero, a mowing application consultant at Grasshopper, has worked closely with Berry College to help them select the right mowers for the different types of mowing situations their ground crew encounters.

"When they are looking to bring another mower in, I find out where they are going to use it," Dinero says. "I'll even go over to campus to look around. Then we can configure the mower to however the crew is going to use it. We never want to just deliver a mower and hope it does what they need."

FrontMounts are utilized in the hillier areas of campus where the terrain constantly changes. "A longer FrontMount machine really helps in this regard," Dinero says.

The two Model 440Bs are Berry College's go-to mowers when speed and cut quality are of utmost importance. "They use these mowers on the main entrances, athletic fields, and even the president's house," Dinero says.

The 329B MidMount with the PowerVac Collection System is used to maintain the grounds around a popular tourist attraction known as the House o' Dreams. Sitting atop Lavender Mountain, the house is surrounded by trees. Dinero says Berry College has been impressed with how the PowerVac Collection System makes leaf removal so much easier.

Berry College's most recent purchase is the SO26 Stand-On. Crews needed a lighter mower that would be gentler on the fresh sod surrounding a new building that had just opened up. A 52" Stand-On was the perfect solution.

"Our ability to communicate and work

together on the right solutions is what has made our partnership with Berry College so successful," Dinero says.

How Grasshopper mowers help save money

As the person in charge of maintaining Berry College's vehicles and equipment, Chastain was hopeful that the Grasshoppers would be more cost-effective than some of the other mowers in the ground crew's fleet. He hasn't been disappointed.

First of all, Berry College saved money on the upfront purchase because they took advantage of a cooperative purchasing program Grasshopper is a part of. Those types of programs help ensure the best pricing for governmental and non-profit agencies. "Berry College chose the agreement we have with GovMVMt," Dinero points out.

Grasshopper mowers have also been less

expensive to operate, particularly in the area of fuel cost. The EFI engines on Berry College's two most utilized MidMount mowers have helped reduce fuel consumption.

Common replacement parts are also less expensive than many other mower brands, including one that Berry College had been operating for years.

"A new spindle assembly from Grasshopper is nearly half the price of other brands," Dinero cites as an example. "Our spindles are also easily rebuildable. That enables a technician to take a worn spindle off, install a new one, and take the worn one back to the shop to replace whatever components need replacing. That helps keep the mower up and running while keeping maintenance costs down."

Parts commonality has also helped Berry College save money. For example, the same belt and spindle can be used on a certain deck *continued...*

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size across different Grasshopper models. That allows Chastain to streamline his parts inventory and keep costs down.

How Grasshopper mowers help save time

Grasshopper mowers have the right combination of ground speed, cut quality, and operator comfort. That combination has allowed for maximum productivity, Dinero reports.

Berry College ground crews are also saving time when servicing mowers. “The Grasshoppers have been so much easier to maintain than other brands we’ve used,” Chastain relates.

As an example, Dinero points to the extended 1,000-hour service interval on a mower’s first hydro fluid change, which is nearly four times longer than many other mowers. “Grasshopper’s blades will also

typically last a lot longer than many other mowers,” Dinero adds.

Access to common service items is also made easier by the Grasshopper design, which helps speed up repairs.

“The hood opens easily and the seat flips up easily,” Dinero explains. “Crews really like the PowerFold® deck on their two FrontMount mowers, which automatically raises at the touch of a switch. Sometimes basic repairs like blade or belt changes can be made in the field, which saves a lot of time because the campus is so large and the repair shop might be quite a ways away from where a crew is mowing.”

Having a strong local Grasshopper dealer nearby also helps Berry College save time. Chastain’s repair shop handles all preventive maintenance in-house, as well as most non-warranty repairs. It’s nice to know that parts are always readily available just 10 miles

down the road.

“Berry College has built a great relationship with their dealer,” Dinero says. “Getting parts is no longer a challenge like it was with another brand they were using. Sometimes I play middleman and pick things up and drop them off. We all work together to do whatever we can to keep their mowers running and their costs down.”

That’s precisely why Berry College has continued to add more Grasshoppers to their fleet.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Founded in  Kansas, Grasshopper is a family-owned, innovation-driven manufacturer of American-made zero-turn mowers. Since introducing its first mower in 1969, the company has remained committed to engineering excellence, operator comfort, lasting performance, and dependable dealer support worldwide.



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