

WHAT OUR USERS ARE SAYING

For John Fisher, trees aren't just a hobby; they have been a way of life at Fisher Christmas Trees in Marseilles, Ill., for 25 years.

Of the 5 acres Fisher calls home, 3-1/2 are dedicated to the tree farm. On average, it takes about 10 years from planting for a tree to reach market maturity, and each year he sells about 150 trees.

At one time, he estimates he had 3,500 trees – nearly 1,000 per acre – growing on the farm.

"That's a lot of trees to care for," he says. "And mow around."

The 10-foot Scotch pines can grow to approximately 6 feet across and are planted 6 feet apart, in straight rows and diagonally.

"That doesn't leave a lot of room to mow around them," says Fisher.



"But it's not been a problem since I bought my Grasshopper."

His 616 FrontMount™ with a 48-inch cutting deck makes quick work of the job. He says it has cut his mowing time by more than one-third.

"It used to take me eight hours or more with my old tractor-style mower. It didn't have a very good cut, and it didn't maneuver very well."

Not so with the Grasshopper, he says. The overall length of the mower is 8 feet, but it maneuvers through the tree rows with ease, trimming around and under the trees as it goes.

"The out-front deck and zero-radius are my favorite features. It's just a perfect combination."

Fisher says that during the rainy spring season, he has to keep up with the mowing on the farm about once a week, but throughout the summer months when the rainfall decreases, he only mows the rows once every three weeks, giving him more time to tend to the trees themselves.

"I'll mow one pass down a row, and then down the next, leaving a little strip on the other side," he says. "The next time I mow, I go down the overgrown side, and the Grasshopper takes care of the tall stuff so easily. Switching from one side to the other each time is an efficient timesaver in the off-season."

To prepare for the busy Christmas season, Fisher will mow once down the diagonal rows after the first frost in early October, making sure that the grass is short to make it easy for the hundreds of customers who will meander their way among the trees between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

After the last mowing, he prepares for snow. "The out-front deck also detaches and interchanges with a dozer blade for clearing snow from my 100-foot driveway, as well as two of my neighbors' drives."

Another Grasshopper feature that Fisher likes is its comfortable seat and smooth ride.

"From time to time, I do experience some lower back pain, but I've found the Grasshopper is comfortable enough that I can mow without any painful discomfort."

Even though he loves the tree business, he only has five or six years of marketable trees left; he plans to phase out the business in those remaining years.

"At that time, I'll be past 70 years old. It's hard work. I enjoy it, but it takes its toll."

But even after the trees and the customers are long gone, he will still have 5 acres to mow.

"I don't see giving up my Grasshopper anytime soon, though," he says. "That's for sure." ~