

FOCUS

SUMMER 2021

Hitachi Wheel Loaders Keep Black Gold Compost Moving

- Taylor-Cade Trees relies on Hitachi ZW80s to grow
- Pasco Iron & Metal switched from a skid steer to a Hitachi ZW50
- Larson Topsoil adds two Hitachi ZW50s
- Compact Wheel Loaders vs. Skid Steers

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Welcome to our summer edition of *FOCUS* magazine

FOCUS magazine, first published in 2003, was inspired by a team of Kawasaki dealer personnel, satisfied customers and an eager Kawasaki marketing team who wanted to bring compelling stories, tips and industry news to wheel loader users throughout North America. Eighteen years later, our goals remain the same, our focus renewed with the global vision of Hitachi.

Just in time for the growing season, Hitachi's ZW220 wheel loaders keep **Black Gold Compost Company's** business moving. Michael Lange says loaders are essential for their booming business as the country bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic. Read about their success on **page 3**.

When **Taylor-Cade Trees** needs a wheel loader to dig up mature trees and load them onto their trucks, they rely on the power and dependability of the Hitachi ZW80 to tackle the heaviest jobs. Trees such as five-year-old live oaks are in demand, and the Hitachi wheel loader offers the stability and safety features that are crucial to tree extraction. See how Hitachi makes the job safer and easier on **page 5**.

Larry Larson, owner of **Larson Topsoil** in Central Florida, added two Hitachi ZW50s to help them load even the tallest haul trucks. Operators love the closed cab, climate control and better visibility of the wheel loaders. Read about how the ZW50s offer power, comfort and safety on **page 7**.

Pasco Iron & Metal wanted to spare its operators the shower of aluminum shavings that come from loading aluminum turnings with a skid steer. They made the decision with the Hitachi ZW50 compact wheel loader to not only keep the operator away from the aluminum spillage but to compare productivity and operating costs against the skid steers. Read about how the ZW50 won in every category on **page 9**.

So, how do compact loaders line up against skid steers? See **page 11** for the head-to-head comparison that can help you make the right choice.

On the cover: Jody Futch, general manager, Black Gold Compost.
Stories and photos by Tom Jackson

MOVING COMPOST



Black Gold Compost Company relies on Hitachi wheel loaders to keep their compost business moving

If you've been in a big box or retail home center store in the past few decades you've seen the distinctive black and yellow bags of Black Kow Compost in the garden section.

Behind those products is an Oxford, Florida-based company, Black Gold Compost, with a long relationship to the wheel loaders of Hitachi and its predecessor, Kawasaki.

Black Gold Compost was founded in 1970. The Lange family bought the company in 1985, and at one point all the brothers and sisters had worked in the business. Today, Michael Lange is the president and one of his sisters still works in the office. The company produced 50,000 bags of compost in its first year. Last year, it produced 6 million, and it now offers a diverse range of products such as Black Kow Topsoil, Black Velvet Planting Soil, Mushroom Compost, and the basic Black Kow Mature Manure compost.

And as with so many other home and garden products throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, sales of Black Gold Compost products have boomed. "We're probably up by 30 or 40%," Lange says.

Equipment intensive

Black Gold's site fills some 120 acres total, with up to eight loaders traversing 80 acres of that. The loaders stay busy, each averaging about 2,000 to 2,500 hours of work a year.

Almost every day, mountains of dry cow manure are hauled in from dairy farms in the region and dumped onto the back of the site. As needed, the manure is loaded into trucks, then laid out in dozens of long windrows. After being mixed by stirring machines, each of the windrows is moved forward by the loaders in a slow march toward the front of the site.

"We compost year-round in Florida," Lange says. "After all, the dairy cows make manure every day. But because of the seasonality of sales, it may be

six months to a year before the material goes into a bag."

Key machines

Loaders are essential to the process from start to finish and Black Gold's relationship with Hitachi and before that, Kawasaki, goes back decades. More recently, the company bought two new Hitachi ZW220s to keep up with the growing demand.

"We've done business with Great Southern Equipment and Kawasaki from the beginning," Lange says. "The first loaders we bought in 1985 were Kawasakis. They make up probably 80% of our fleet. They are reliable and they don't break down. I think the operators like the comfort and the controls."

For the purchase of the two newest Hitachi loaders the company ran a comparison test with loaders from two competing brands. Hitachi won the competition based on price and two other important factors.



"It seemed like the Hitachis had a lot more power and were more user friendly," says Jody Futch, general manager. "There wasn't much difference between these and our Kawasakis, so they were familiar to our operators. For them it's like riding a bicycle — exactly the same."

Good maintenance, long life

Looking around the Black Gold site in Florida, you'll still see several of the KCM branded Kawasaki loaders still running strong.

The company was even recognized by this magazine back in 2014 when it purchased Kawasaki's first generation of Tier 4 emissions compliant loaders, the Kawasaki 80Z7.

As the loaders age, the company will have Great Southern Equipment rebuild their engines and transmissions to give them a second life. The only regular replacement item unique to the operation is the bucket.

"Because of the corrosive nature of the compost, we used to have bucket liners that got us to about 5,000 hours," Futch says. "But our supplier went out of business so we've started using a heavier duty bucket and those seem to last a little longer."

Even the airborne dust is corrosive, so the loaders are pressure washed at the end of every day. "We have a washout station set up and it only takes five or 10 minutes," Futch says. "If you let that material sit on the loader, it will eat it out the metal," he says. Hose fittings, valves and pins are particularly vulnerable.

The corrosion was one reason Black Gold decided not to put auto-lube systems on their new Hitachis. "The material we were loading was corroding the ends of the lines, so we wanted to try the new loaders without them and just have the operators grease them every morning," Futch says.

No regens

Hitachi's new loaders use selective catalytic reduction (SCR) and a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) to reduce emissions. Many other brands of loaders and equipment use diesel particulate filters (DPF) to reduce emissions but these systems also require periodic regeneration — meaning a super-hot blast of fuel is blown through the DPF and out the exhaust system to burn off soot.

The possibility of DPF-based regens causing a fire when a machine is near combustible material is minimal, but not zero. With hundreds of acres of organic material and airborne dust swirling around Black Gold's site, fire prevention is an important aspect of the operation.

"The Tier 4 Final KCM 80Z7 and Hitachi ZW220s meet the emissions standards without the need for a DPF," says Steve Tuton, salesman for Great Southern Equipment. "They have DEF fluid and a DOC only, thus no regens. It's a serious benefit to buying Hitachi, and thankfully, a problem Black Gold does not have to deal with."

Grooming operators

Mike VanDerTulip, the company's plant manager, sets strict service protocols. Oil changes and other routine maintenance items are handled at 250 hours. In addition to equipment management, VanDerTulip has operational responsibility for the bagging operations and recently supervised the installation of the company's first robotic bag-stacking arm. Of the nearly 25 employees at the company, six are wheel loader operators, and VanDerTulip has a good way to make sure the operators he does put on the machines will take care of them.

"Our operators are chosen from employees who work in the bagging operations," VanDerTulip says. "Those

are the entry level jobs. If they work hard and show interest, we will move them into a loader operator job when one becomes available. It's considered one of the best jobs here. We teach them how to run the loaders by having them push dirt and compost on flat ground, then gradually move them to stockpiles. Once they have the skills, we let them load trucks and the hoppers at the bagging plant."

Good work

The process of turning farm waste into a useful product is good in more ways than one. Lange says his father, who bought Black Gold Compost with a partner in 1985, worked in the agriculture feed industry and had long been aware of the problem dairy farms experience getting rid of their animal waste.

At the time, industrial scale composting was a relatively new industry. But over the years the industry has grown as more people recognize its benefits. It is good for the farmers and good for the environment. It's also good for consumers and their gardens and landscapes, helping homeowners improve poor soil, grow better vegetables and beautify their landscapes.


"The compost industry today is getting much better at the production and quality of compost," Lange says. "And all that material is kept out of the landfills."

Recipe for success

Since composting takes place outdoors, weather is always a challenge. Trucking out as many as 26,000 bags of compost a day requires great logistics.

The key, Lange says, is to have good people, good processes and a good product. "Put them all together and it will keep you busy."

And since loaders are the key to the operation, having good machines and maintenance is also critical for uptime. "We keep our loaders until they won't run anymore, which can be 30,000 or even 40,000 hours," Futch says. "But we keep track of everything. We track every bucket a loader moves to make sure everything is running efficiently." ■



Stoney Maddox and Brett Anderson use a Hitachi ZW80 and tree spade to handle their most expensive product.

FAMILY TREE

Taylor-Cade Trees relies on Hitachi ZW80s to grow its landscaping tree business.

Stoney Maddox, owner of Taylor-Cade Trees, located in central Florida, uses a wide range of equipment from hand spades to six-ton loaders to grow the family-owned landscaping tree business.

Maddox started young, working as a helper in his father's vegetable farm, and has had his hands in the soil growing plants since as far back as he can remember.

In 1999 he acquired nine acres and started a tree farm business in Bevilles Corner, Florida.

From those humble beginnings, he's grown his business to encompass more than 100 acres.

Taylor-Cade Trees (named after his children) nurtures trees from the seeds in a greenhouse up to mature specimens planted in the ground and harvested after five years. Selling to nurseries and frontline landscapers, the company offers everything from containerized trees and shrubs to ground-planted trees upward of

10 to 20 feet tall. Live oaks are his most popular product, but he sells plenty of magnolias and evergreens as well.

With large greenhouses and planted trees stretching to the horizon, Maddox is a busy man. "We have 34 employees and planting goes on year-round," he says. As a wholesale distributor the company sells north of 300,000 trees a year. Taylor-Cade Trees is family owned and operated. Maddox's wife, Lori, does the company payroll while he mostly takes care of the work in the fields and greenhouses.

Maddox's employees plant seedlings and containers six days a week, sometimes seven. Planting and harvesting the more mature trees in the ground usually takes place in the winter when there is less stress on the trees. But there's no real off season.

While in the containers the trees grow 6 to 10 feet tall. To keep these container-bound trees from blowing over in a storm, they're lashed to a long line of cable. But when hurricanes threaten, it's all hands on deck as crews scramble to untie the cables and lay these hundreds of valuable and vulnerable trees on the ground.

Maddox says he occasionally forces himself to take a few days off to go fishing or hunting, but even then, in the back of his mind, he says he's always thinking about his trees.

Starting with seed

In the Taylor-Cade greenhouses, thousands of seeds growing in trays must be maintained at precise temperatures and moisture levels around the clock until they're ready to transfer into containers. Depending on the species, the temperature, moisture and soil medium in which they're growing vary by subtle amounts. There's a lot of science to it, but Maddox is beyond science. After all these years, he's turned it into an art.

From starting the seedlings to pruning, there is a huge amount of hand work that goes into a tree farm like Taylor-Cade. But with more than 100 acres in play they need machinery as well. The company's fleet consists of an aerial lift, trucks, sprayers and a dozen or so utility tractors.

That's enough to keep mechanic Brett Anderson busy year-round. But the workhorses and newest machines in his fleet are two recently acquired Hitachi

ZW80 wheel loaders, both of which see about 500 hours a year.

Maddox chose the Hitachis in large part because for years he had run the precursor to the Hitachi ZW80, the TCM loader. “Except for our old TCM, we’ve never had anything other than the Hitachis. They’re bullet proof,” Maddox says. Taylor-Cade operators run the loaders to clean up, build burn piles and move pallets. But the most critical application performed by the ZW80s is powering a tree spade to dig up the mature trees and load them onto trucks.

Valuable commodities

Once the containerized trees are planted in the ground and begin growing, crews work through the rows and carefully prune them several times a season to make sure the leaves or needles get a full measure of sunshine and the trunks grow as straight as possible. As you might imagine with all the time and work that goes into them, these planted trees are Taylor-Cade’s most valuable commodities.

Live oaks are even more in demand this year. After winter ice and single-digit temperatures killed vast numbers of trees in Texas, the call for trees heading west has been unprecedented, Maddox says.



Steve Tuton, with GS Equipment, discusses the ZW80's performance with Maddox.

Reaping the reward

After three to five years in the ground, it's time to harvest. And Maddox is not about to roll into his carefully manicured fields with anything less than a stable, dependable, low-impact machine.

The harvest starts with a tree spade attached to custom made boom on the bucket attachment plate of the ZW80 loaders. Auxiliary hydraulics open the spade as it is centered on the trunk. Once in position, three long triangular blades are driven down into the ground, cutting a conical shaped hole three feet deep around the root ball.

Cradled in the spade, the tree and root ball are lifted out of the ground. The hole is then lined with a poly sheet and wire mesh, and then the tree and root ball are placed back into the hole. Over the next few months, the roots grow through the wire and poly, which stabilize the root ball. Crews then return with the loader and spade, dig up the tree again and place the whole bundle — tree, root ball, with wire and poly intact — into a truck for transport.

Stability is safety

With the weight of a tree spade and a five-year-old live-oak on the end of the boom, machine stability is an important factor for Maddox. Unlike most loaders which mount the rear wheels rigid to the frame, the Hitachis have an axle that oscillates in the middle around the differential, same as a truck axle. That makes the machine more stable on sloped and uneven ground.

And while Taylor-Cade's fields are flat and meticulously maintained, the risk of a tire slipping into a hole is a concern. A loader with wheels mounted to the frame in these circumstances might easily tip over, especially carrying a heavy load held high. With Hitachi's oscillating axle the loader is more stable on uneven ground.

Maddox says his Hitachi loaders might get stuck in a hole, but they are much less likely to tip over. “That’s a good safety feature they have on those machines that a lot of other loaders do not offer,” he says. And it’s no less important than when the load it’s carrying is the culmination of five years’ worth of work.



The most critical job for the ZW80s is powering a tree spade to dig up the mature trees and load them onto trucks

Some tree farms use spades mounted on skid steers or compact track loaders to extract their trees, but Maddox prefers the wheel loader. The visibility is better, and CTLs and skid steers, no matter how carefully you operate them, tear up the ground. Maddox keeps a neat carpet of grass growing throughout his fields. The wheel loaders are heavy, but by virtue of their big tires and articulated steering, they won't disturb the grass. And as long as there is grass in the rows, the mud and runoff created by rains is minimal. That's no small thing in coastal Florida.

Something old, something new

Maddox bought his first Hitachi branded ZW80 when he found out that the company that made the TCM loaders was acquired by Hitachi. “I called the number that was on the old TCM machine and found out they no longer made them,” he says. But Great Southern Equipment was able to get parts for the TCMs after Hitachi bought them and that led to a relationship between Maddox and salesman Steve Tuton.

“Steve and Great Southern Equipment have been good to work with. I’ve never even been to their dealership, but they send the filters and service items to our locations and take good care of us,” Maddox says. ■



COOL COMFORT

Larson Topsoil adds two Hitachi ZW50s to grow their landscape materials business in Central Florida

Landscapers in Central Florida stay busy year-round. To feed their never-ending appetite for materials, Larson Topsoil sells and delivers everything they need: mulch, rock, gravel, sand topsoil, potting soil and shell.

With a small crew including himself, his son and wife and four others, company president Larry Larson dispenses \$3 million worth of materials every year using a small fleet of equipment and four Class 8 delivery trucks.

Based in Clearwater, Florida, Larson sells to everybody, from homeowners to big outfits, and that means a lot of activity. On any given day they load everything from pickup trucks to tractor-trailer rigs. Space is tight on his yard, and the machines stay busy.

Visibility and maneuverability

Given this environment, Larson's latest additions to his fleet, two Hitachi ZW50 loaders, make a lot of sense.

The loaders' small size (just 5-foot-5-inches wide over the tires) and good visibility work well on a crowded yard. At full reach the bucket pin height (10 feet, 4 inches) allows them to load even the tallest haul trucks. And with the company's offices yards away from the stockpiles, it doesn't hurt that the ZW50's 44-horsepower, Tier 4 Final engines make them the quietest machines on the property.

"In all honesty, I really love the Hitachis," Larson says. "They are sweet machines and they have lots of power."



Justin Larson, the company's general manager, appreciates the ZW50's closed cab and AC during Florida's hot summers.

Compared to a skid steer, the wheel loaders' better visibility is an important factor for Larson. "I've known customers in the landscaping business who were hurt on skid steers; one customer got killed by one," he says. "I wouldn't have a skid steer in my operation."

And the benefits of the ZW50's closed cab with climate control make for happy operators in Central Florida. "When I was ordering the Hitachis, I asked my nephew who works for me if he wanted an open or closed cab," Larson says. "He said it didn't matter, but once he got in the closed cab with the air conditioning, he wanted to hug me."

Word of mouth

Larson's enthusiasm seems to have spread to other family members. "My brother has a business similar to mine. He bought a Hitachi ZW80, and my brother-in-law bought two ZW80s. Those are open cabs but they bought them pretty much on word of mouth because I liked the ZW50s so much," Larson says.

And Larson may not be the easiest customer to sell equipment to. "It depends on who shows up and what kind of mood I'm in," Larson says. Nevertheless, he's been satisfied in his relationship with his dealer, Great Southern Equipment.

"We had one issue with the loader but they came right out and fixed it. Otherwise, we haven't had any problems. One loader has about 2,000 hours on it and another is close to 1,100 hours. They've been great machines."

Debt free

Like many people who work with heavy equipment, Larson and his son Justin, are car enthusiasts. Larry owns a baby-blue '57 Chevy pickup truck that he had restored and upgraded. His current project is a '55 Chevrolet Bel Aire, which is undergoing a complete frame-off restoration.

Larson's business philosophy includes a healthy aversion to debt. That's one of the reasons his company weathered the 2008-09 recession with little damage.



Larson Topsoil uses Hitachi ZW50 wheel loaders to transport and load mulch, rock, gravel, sand topsoil, potting soil and shell.

"I learned working for my dad, who also had a landscape materials business, to always put some money away for a rainy day," Larson says. "So, we were able to survive the recession. We slowed down some, but we were still moving right along. We've been blessed to keep going. Debt is a real killer."

And it doesn't hurt to have a wife who worked in a bank before joining the business. "All she does is save. She never wants to spend," Larson says, though he means it as a compliment. Asked the number one reason he's been successful in business, Larson says, "A good wife."

Location, location, location

Larson has operated out of the same location since starting his business 38 years ago. With access to Clearwater, Palm Harbor and Pinellas Park, landscapers in three counties know it's easy to get to Larson Topsoil.

"Everything came to us," Larson says. "Even people further away will drive down to us because we've got such a good reputation. And believe it or not, I still sell to customers we had when we started."

Friends and family program

Having mostly family and friends of family in the business helps keep Larson Topsoil

stable and successful as well.

Finding outside help — people who can drive a truck and run a machine, who will show up on time and work hard — is a struggle for Larson, like any other business owner. "I've hired some people from the outside but it usually doesn't work out," Larson says.

"But Harold in the office, he's been a family friend for 45 years," Larson says. "My sister has worked for me from the get-go. My wife left her job to work for us four years into our marriage. Justin has worked for me since his teens and now he's the general manager. And Aaron Thompson, my nephew, is the yard manager."

A tight knit crew of family and friends helped bring success to the company. But it also requires flexibility. If you work at Larson Topsoil you do whatever needs to be done, whenever it needs doing, even if you're the boss.

Some days Larson rarely leaves the office. Some days he rarely sees it. "Like today, I jumped in a truck and took an order of shell to Oldsmar," he says. "I came back, jumped into another truck, took a load of filler dirt to the northeast section, then came back and jumped into the loader to pile up a bunch of dirt. Every day is different." ■



Matt Goldman anticipates that his new Hitachi ZW50 will also deliver improved operating costs over skid steers.



HEAVY METAL

Pasco Iron & Metal switched from a skid steer to a Hitachi ZW50 compact wheel loader to create a cleaner, safer, and more productive work environment.

After learning the trade from his father, Matt Goldman started Pasco Iron & Metal in 2007 with just three employees. Today the Land O' Lakes, Florida, company has grown to employ 50 people. Across its two locations, Pasco operates a fleet of nine trucks, six cranes and five skid steer loaders. Crushers and processing equipment bang away at mountains of incoming and outgoing scrap metal all day long.

"We have two full-time mechanics and one full-time welder and could use two more mechanics," Goldman says. "But having control over our transportation gives us an advantage over most of our

competition. We pay a little bit more for maintenance and service, but that control adds value. And the customers love the service."

Recycling big time

Pasco recycles a wide variety of metals including iron, stainless steel, aluminum, copper, nickel, brass and lead. Along with their second location in Largo, they buy old appliances, radiators, batteries, wire, circuit boards, aluminum shavings and all sorts of industrial-size lots of scrap metal. The material is dumped in the yard and then processed, typically crushed or melted into ingots and then sold to companies that will use it into make new products.

In 2013 the company added a railroad spur and started leasing rail cars to deliver large shipments of scrap iron to the ports and other rail terminals. On an annual basis, Pasco Iron & Metal

ships 40,000 tons of steel and iron, the equivalent of 500 rail cars. Nonferrous shipments, copper and aluminum primarily, run about 24 million pounds a year.

Taking delivery of this material, processing it, and then loading it onto trucks and railcars and shipping it out again makes for a very busy yard. It's kinetic, noisy and nonstop.

Aluminum rain

One of the most challenging jobs in the company is loading aluminum turnings. These are fine strands of aluminum that come off lathes and milling machines, and Pasco regularly receives and processes tons of it. The problem is that when loading these turnings with a skid steer, the bucket is so close to the operator that he invariably gets littered with stray shavings as he dumps the bucket into a truck.



One of the most challenging jobs in the company is loading aluminum turnings. These are fine strands of aluminum that come off lathes and milling machines, and Pasco regularly receives and processes tons of it.

These shavings wind up accumulating in the operator's lap and pile up so deep in the footwell of the cab that it becomes hard to work the pedals. Operators crawl out of the cab at the end of the day with hundreds of tiny bits of aluminum clinging to their clothing and boots.

Better way to load

The company decided to try a Hitachi ZW50 compact wheel loader, not only to keep the cab and operator away from the aluminum spillage, but to see how it competed against skid steers in terms of productivity and operating costs.

They didn't have to look far. They already enjoyed a good relationship with Great Southern Equipment, the local Hitachi dealer, and had bought several cranes from them.

"We called Steve Tuton, our salesperson at GSE, and told him, 'We know you sell these. What can you do for us?'" says Jimbo Jennings, operations and dispatch manager. "And we got it worked out. We didn't even look at another one, because of what Steve had to offer."

So far, Pasco operators have had just a few weeks on the Hitachi ZW50, but they like it, Jennings says. With the longer wheelbase the bucket is far enough in front of the cab that stray shavings fall to the ground instead. "It's working well for them," he says. "Not only are the

operators and the cab staying clean, but the compact wheel loader has a bit more power than the skid steers."

Right-sizing the machine

Choosing the size of loader was something Pasco did debate. Hitachi offers one size smaller, a ZW30, and plenty of loaders larger than the ZW50. But the ZW50 met all the important criteria.

"The ZW50 isn't that much bigger than the ZW30 but it has more power and lifting capacity," Jennings says.

Visibility is another plus. "The operator can see more around him on the ZW50," Goldman says. "He's not in a box. He can see where he is loading. And it has a bigger bucket and can handle more volume than a skid steer."

What's more, Goldman wanted a machine that could withstand the rigors of the scrapyards. "That's my biggest challenge," he says. "We don't want to be putting out maintenance fires all the time, he says. "If you have a machine down, you're dead in the water. You're not going to get those hours back."

O&O costs

As far as skid steers versus compact wheel loaders, Goldman cites several operating cost advantages. One



With a skid steer, aluminum shavings fell on the operator with each bucket-full.

immediate gain is reduced tire wear on the expensive solid-rubber tires necessary in scrap yard operations. "Since it isn't skidding all day long, the tires should last a lot longer with the articulated steering," he says. "On our skid steers we're replacing tires once a year."

Pasco also had good reason to want a long-lasting machine. Metal scrap yards are some of the most brutal environments a machine can encounter. "We get about five years out of our skid steers, but we should be getting 10 or 12," Goldman says.

And while compact wheel loaders offer plenty of power, they typically have smaller engines than similar-capacity skid steers. A skid steer puts a lot of its engine power into turning and moving the machine around. The compact wheel loader, on the other hand, has an axle, articulated steering and a differential. This makes maneuvering more energy efficient and frees up additional power for the hydraulics. There's less load on the engine and as a result, lower fuel use and longer engine life.

A compact wheel loader is initially more expensive than a skid steer, but Goldman says the expectation is that it will be more productive, hold up better and deliver lower operating costs over time. ■

COMPACT WHEEL LOADERS VS. SKID STEERS



Be sure to discuss with your dealer the merits and demerits of skid steers versus compact wheel loaders before making a purchase.

SKID STEER BENEFITS

- Low cost, highly versatile construction machine
- Mechanically simple
- Counter-rotation, maneuverable in tight spaces
- Quick and nimble

SKID STEER DRAWBACKS

- Low visibility to sides and rear
- Will leave ruts and tear up turf or soft ground
- Bucket and material positioned close to operator
- Requires a higher horsepower engine, generally 50-74 hp

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COMPACT WHEEL LOADER BENEFITS

- Excellent visibility all around
- Operator sits up higher and further way from bucket
- Larger tires easier on turf or soft ground
- Articulated steering and longer wheelbase enhance stability, especially when loading trucks
- Generally smaller engines: 40-55 hp, which means lower fuel and maintenance costs and often no requirement for diesel exhaust fluid
- Better at load and carry
- Roomier and more comfortable ride

COMPACT WHEEL LOADER DRAWBACKS

- More expensive than skid steers
- Can't counter-rotate

VERDICT

Both machines can be outfitted with dozens of hydraulically powered attachments. The skid steer is an excellent entry level machine and versatile enough to do almost any task on the jobsite. The wheel loader's smaller engine helps lower total cost of ownership over time. Choose a skid steer if you want a low cost, fast and versatile machine and you don't mind or need to fix ruts and disturbed ground. Choose the compact wheel loader if visibility, operator safety, and precise positioning is important and you, if you do a lot of truck loading or load and carry operations, or you need all day comfort in the cab.

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