

# Robot Mowers Role To Grow For Commercial Cutting



Source: [www.TurfMagazine.com](http://www.TurfMagazine.com)

They don't look like they could do a whole lot of work. After all, they're small and they're not particularly fast. But they've got their share of good points, many positives in fact. For starters they never work with a hangover and they work any time you want them to work, even at night. They're also much quieter than their bigger brothers – the commercial mowers that now dominate America's huge lawn maintenance industry.

We're referring to robotic mowers, of course.

If you attended the record-breaking 2017 GIE+EXPO you may not have even noticed the few robotic models on display. Many of you likely spent most of your time checking out the ever-growing number of different brands (and models) of powerful and brightly colored zero-turns there. Almost surely you put some of them through their paces in the huge outdoor demo. The weather was perfect for testing equipment.

And if you did notice the few robotic mowers at the EXPO, perhaps you dismissed these squat, beetle-like units as something homeowners might buy if they have neither the time nor the desire to mow their own yards. Or perhaps, at-a-glance, you pegged them as something a consumer might buy to impress neighbors with their newest "toy."



Photo: STIHL

Make no mistake, today's robotic mowers are not toys given the incredible innovation leading to their development. Regardless of brand, these are very sophisticated machines. They represent yet another solution for specialized mowing applications. Some of the biggest suppliers in the market feel robot units will emerge as yet another welcome solution – albeit it a specialized solution ... at least at first – that contractors will embrace in the

increasingly competitive, labor-stressed environment they are facing.

Evidence of this is the work being done by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) to develop ANSI standards for robotic mowers. ANSI is the acronym for the American National Standards Institute, which coordinates the development of voluntary-consensus industry standards. The ANS (American National Standards) are developed as voluntary documents that are recognized by U.S. federal, state and local bodies for regulatory and other related purposes.

"The first ANSI standard is going to be an OPEI standard," said OPEI President and CEO Kris R. Kiser at the recent EXPO. "We're just about done with it," adding it expects the standards to be completed next spring.

"One the standards is complete and it is final the manufacturers (of robotic mowers) will get a better sense of liability."

Kiser added that he sees much greater adoption of robot mowers by both homeowners and commercial cutters.

"They are a big chunk of the future," added Kiser. "You're going to see landscapers buy them, put them at houses and let them do their work. They always show up for work, they run at night and they don't call in sick."