

Learning to Drive a Zero-Turn Mower at Husqvarna's Media Event

The logo for "Turf" features the word in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A stylized green grass blade is integrated into the letter 'T'.The logo for "Tree Services" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf icon is positioned above the 'e' in "Services". Below the main text, the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" is written in a smaller, lighter font.The logo for "DesignBuild" features the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font, followed by "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square icon is positioned above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for "PLOW" is in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right.

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✖ By Amy Hill, editor of *Turf*

Being an editor, I spend most of my day sitting at a desk working on a computer. I'm not out in the field like most of you, and I'm certainly no whiz at zipping around a large expanse of turfgrass on one of those nimble, grass-munching zero-turn-radius mowers. In fact, my experience operating one of these beauties is pretty much nil. Nada. Zero.

(In the spirit of full disclosure, I have operated a lawn tractor.)

So naturally, I was both excited and apprehensive when I was invited to attend an event celebrating the opening of Husqvarna's new R&D center in Charlotte, N.C., earlier this month. Yes, I have to admit I was nervous about what the event might hold because I had a feeling that I would be

"encouraged" to try out some of Husqvarna's equipment. My hunch was right. Husqvarna, which manufactures and markets products for the full spectrum of professional landscape and turf care had prepared lots of products ready for us to demo, including chain saws, trimmers, edgers, pole saws, seeders and much, much more. And I was wondering if I had the nerve and ability to operate any of these machines, pieces that all of you effortlessly use every day. Turns out, I really didn't need to get worked up. The helpful people at Husqvarna offered encouraging words and more than a little nervous guidance. What a fun experience!

Where to begin?

Let's start by saying the weather was hot-105 degrees Fahrenheit hot figuring in the heat index. Even so, it didn't stop the Husqvarna people from setting up a nice little track for us to test out their zero-turn mowers (complete with bottled water, Gatorade, hand-held fans and sunscreen). Charlotte is the NASCAR capital of the world and the heat wouldn't stop Dale Jr. and friends, right?

As it turned out, I wasn't so bad at wheeling the zero-turn around the track-not so bad at all. I finished the course at just over two minutes. What

caught me up was the part where I had to drive over a curb and then back up over it again and onto the grass-I just couldn't figure out how to steer while I was backing up. I had the option of skipping that part of the course (with a five-second penalty), but I couldn't let myself give up, and eventually (what seemed like eternity) I was able to get back on course and make it to the finish line. While I didn't take the top prize, I didn't come in last either! Turns out it's a lot harder than it looks, but I'm convinced that with a little more practice, I could get a lot better at it!

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