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# Jax for al





# I trades

Light weight, ease of transport and smooth operation make Bil-Jax the lift of choice for some Michigan tradesmen

BY PAT WALKER, EDITOR

GRAND RAPIDS, MI — If you're thinking about the equipment you need for the next job on the schedule, maybe it's time to look at a towable aerial lift to get the job done. They have many of the same features as its bigger brethren, as well as other advantages, such as weighing less, easily transported and also cost less to buy or rent.

John Benson has been trimming trees since his boyhood days on the family farm. He has never used ladders, because there is only one place for a ladder to go, and that's down. In his younger days he did don spikes and climbed up into trees. He retired from working for the city a couple years ago, and even though he's pushing 71, still loves working on limbs and leaves. Being able to rent a Bil-Jax towable allows him to stay active in the industry.

"This is a young man's game," he says. "I'm not the monkey I used to be. I don't climb like I used to as I am bow-legged and my knees got the bads. But I still enjoy doing it. My knees won't allow me to go out everyday and do a job, but using a lift has kept me in the game.

"It allows me to get into places where I couldn't before unless I was climbing," he adds. "Plus it's four to five times faster than hand-climbing. Guys on the ground are safer because I can watch them whereas before I had to

pay strict attention to where I was, and what I was doing. The jobsite is safer overall."

One nice safety feature Benson likes is the horn that sounds when the lift is descending. It alerts not only those on the ground, but also the operator in case he accidentally hit the button to begin descent.

## No weighty issues

Weighing considerably less means they are less likely to damage laid concrete or asphalt and they don't

5,000 pounds.

"The Bil-Jax machines are nice because you can pull it behind your truck," Benson said. "They get around real good. It's got larger tires, so it won't sink into the soft ground quite as much. They have more angles of movement compared to some of the others, so you can maneuver around a tree easily."

Dick Quick, an electrician with Johnson Electric, also is a fan of the towables as they are very user friendly compared to some other lifts he has used over the years and offer a

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— John Benson, Tree trimmer

require a Commercial Driver's License to haul around. Considering the fact that a traditional self-propelled 60-foot boom lift weighs in at approximately 24,000 pounds, users can achieve nearly the same working height at less than

smoother ride.

"The operations are smoother, too," he says. "There isn't any jerkiness to contend with. The movement, from the ground through the bucket is nice and smooth."



It can be a problem maneuvering a big boom lifts into backyard to tight jobsite. They can tear up the grass or leave huge ruts in residential sites, meaning rehabilitation work for the contractor in many cases.

“They don’t do a lot of lawn damage,” Benson said. “It would have to be extremely wet for that to happen really. If you know anything about lawn care, you can repair it really quick.”

## Tight spaces pose no problems

Benson finds he can drive the Bil-Jax lift into a lot more areas other machines can’t.

“It moves more at an angle than other machines and being lighter I can get it in and position exactly where I need the lift to be, so I don’t have to be moving it constantly,” he says. “Once you position the lift, you just want to cut and drop. You don’t want to spend a lot of time jockeying around.

“Because the lift articulates,” he adds, “we can go over and around the peakline of houses easily. The Bil-Jax bucket is nice. You can twist it to get between obstacles. The controls are really accessible, handy, they work really smooth and I have no complaints about them at all.”

Quick echoes those sentiments.

“With my job, I have to maneuver in and around a lot of things to get my job done,” Quick said. “The controls are very smooth so I can feather the bucket right into the ideal position. It really makes a difference. I like the gravity-feed descent as it takes less power from the battery, so I can get more work done without worrying if I am going to run out of battery power.”

One of Quick’s jobs is to inspecting billboard lights, which many are located in parking lots. Quick likes the fact he is able to reach out, up and over a vehicle and up to a light.

“We have an old bucket truck, but I won’t use that. I’ve been telling the company to get one of these. I much rather be in that than a bucket truck.”

— Dick Quick,  
Electrician, Johnson Electric



The Bil-Jax lift can also go over and under a billboard to other side of the billboard so he cover all the work that has to be done from one position.

“You want to come to a jobsite and look where you want to place the boom, but once you put the outriggers down, you don’t want to have to move it again,” he said. “This gives you that maneuverability.”

## Tailored to the user

While Benson doesn’t have a preference between gas over electric lifts, he is a fan of the control system.

“The controls work really easy,” he said. “It’s generally a two-handed deal. They move up and down smoothly and the speed adjustment comes in real handy. It offers four different speeds, from the turtle to the rabbit. The movement is very smooth.”

Benson, who estimates has used

three different bucket trucks and a variety of aerial lift equipment during his years trimming trees, finds this product feature very beneficial as he can tailor the speed of machine to the demands at hand.

Quick is more direct in his assessment of lift equipment he has to use.

“We have an old bucket truck, but I won’t use that,” he said.

“I’ve been telling the company to get one of these. I much rather be in that than a bucket truck.”

According to Tom Hammerslag, president of Great Lakes Access Inc., the company that rents the towable lift equipment to Quick and Benson’s businesses, the main demand for towables comes from the residential market, but small commercial users have also learned about towable’s advantages.

Among the trades that should consider using towables are electricians, plumbers, remodelers, painters, tree trimmers, pressure washers, eaves maintenance and roofing contractors, sign guys, school districts and lighting maintenance companies.

If Christmas came early, Benson has a simple request to make the Bil-Jax product better, his work easier.

“What I’d really like to see Bil-Jax do is make a lift that’s 15 feet taller,” Benson said. “I’m going over to Detroit later on, and we’re going to be about 20 to 25 feet short of the top. You got power lines on two sides of the tree and it’s going to be tough getting everything we need to reach it. But otherwise, I can’t think of anything they could do besides manufacturing one that’s taller.”

So what they say is true: Bigger is better. **L&C**