

# MY FAVORITE TOOL

## TORO DINGO COMPACT UTILITY LOADER

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MNLA CP

Minneapolis Park  
& Recreation Board  
Lyndale Park Peace Garden

All photos courtesy of  
Erin Buchholz



Erin Buchholz moves heavy composted leaf mulch in the Perennial Trial Garden at Lyndale Park. In years past, volunteers from the Men's and Women's Garden Club of Minneapolis (mostly retirees) would need to move this heavy mulch by hand throughout the 250-foot long border. Being able to move the Dingo into tight spaces, and not worry about its weight killing the plants below, the Garden Club members were very grateful that a formerly strenuous chore is now easy on the body.

ONE OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in these times of a difficult economy is a reduction in staff numbers. How can we continue to maintain an aging infrastructure and build new construction projects with fewer people? More to the point — can we really do more with less?

We've struggled with the volume and frequency of workplace injuries. Our industry has seen that digging in compacted areas, loading mulch and soil, and tilling and cultivating are all hard on the body when done by hand. The Park Board uses skid loaders and tractors whenever possible, but much of our work is done in confined spaces. As such, those spaces sometimes don't receive the careful attention they need.

These problems are disappearing with the use of our newly acquired Dingo TX-427 Wide Track. We selected this model for its light ground pressure, notable 27 HP engine and easy-to-use drive system. Upon learning of all the possibilities with its many available attachments, we've grown even happier with our Dingo.

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The first thing I noticed was how much time it saved me when loading mulch into my utility vehicle. One cool morning (after I'd had my coffee) it took me three minutes to load a full box of dry woodchips with a scoop shovel. When I used the Dingo for the next load, the time dropped to just over one minute for three bucket-loads of one cubic meter each. If it can save that much time first thing in the morning, imagine how much better it would be during the after-lunch grogginess, high temperatures, and humidity that often reduce productivity in the afternoon. The most important benefit is that my arms, shoulders, back and legs do not suffer; the Dingo is very user-friendly.

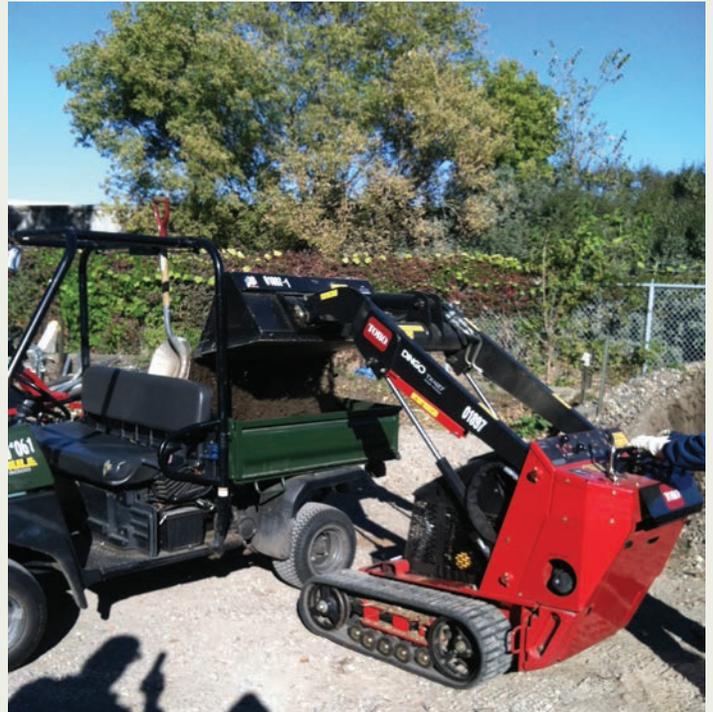
While the bucket currently gets the most use, we are quite pleased with our other attachments. The grapple rake has become an essential addition to our workload. I've been able to move limestone boulders, up to the Dingo's maximum capacity of 1,530 lbs. for lifting off the ground, and 535 lbs. to lift to the maximum height. If you've been to the Peace Garden in Minneapolis, you've seen just how many boulders there are.

Our park keeper at Lake Harriet used the grapple rake to remove overgrown Junipers by the Bandshell. We estimate that it would have taken hours for one person to hand dig and cut each one out, with the high probability that most of the root structure would remain. With the Dingo, he removed all six Junipers in two hours and used the bottom tines of the rake to remove the bulk of the roots from the top 12 inches of the soil bed.

We've used the tiller attachment on our large beds in the annual/perennial border of Lyndale Park, as well as the large circle bed at the Lake Harriet Bandshell. It certainly outperforms smaller tillers with respect to depth, clogging, and compacted soil types. While the specifications say you can till to a depth of 6", after the first pass, we have been able to lower the boom to till down even further.

With numerous attachments manufactured by Toro and offered by Toro partners, we are compiling a wish list of attachments that will further simplify our work. Interest has been shown in the stump grinder for our annual tree replacements, the trencher for irrigation system repair, and even the vibratory plow and bore drive head for laying pipe and cable while minimizing the disturbance to our garden beds. As we currently need to contract this type of work out, we expect the financial benefit of owning the Dingo to become more apparent with each new project.

While the Dingo won't replace larger equipment for larger jobs, it is an essential and versatile tool. Crew leaders, park keepers and horticulturists have all given highly favorable feedback: jobs are completed faster, bodies are not sore from the work, and tight spaces are once again being properly maintained.



Note how well the Dingo loads our utility vehicles. The bucket is the perfect size, so no mess is left behind.



Ryan Sullivan, the park keeper at Lake Harriet, used the grapple rake to remove large junipers from this very narrow space without damaging the building or utilities.