

How To Choose A New Mower

It's that time of year. The grass is growing with a vengeance. Maybe your old mower is on its last legs, or maybe you're just ready for a new one. Here are some tips for choosing your next mower.

Consider The Size Of Your Yard

Small to Medium Yards

For small yards you may only need a small push mower. They are lightweight, very maneuverable, and take up very little storage space. Many people also like the fact that they can get their exercise while doing the lawn.

For medium sized yards or yards that have a lot of hills, you may want to consider a self propelled mower. Just like power steering helps you turn the wheel in your car, these mowers take most of the effort out of pushing the mower. They only help going forward though, you have to pull the full weight of the mower backward, so that is a consideration if you have a lot of back and forth trimming.

If you have a half acre or more but you still want to use a walk behind mower for the exercise or because you have limited storage space, you may want to look at a wider mower. Most walk mowers are 18"-21" wide. A wide area mower can be 30" or more. These are heavier and take a little more effort to maneuver, but they can reduce the time it takes to mow the lawn.

Large yards

For large yards a riding mower is a must. Riding mowers come in two varieties: traditional lawn tractors, and zero turn riding mowers.

Traditional lawn tractors have a steering wheel and the engine in the front, under a hood. They come with mower decks that can vary from 30" wide to 60" wide. They are great for mowing larger areas, especially if the area is fairly wide open. Like a car, you may have to back and fill a little when turning in more confined spaces. Most people are very comfortable driving lawn tractors since they are very similar to cars in the way they handle.

Zero Turn Riders have the engine in the back and typically are steered with two levers that control the rear wheels independently. (There are a few models that have steering wheels instead of levers for those who are more comfortable with that type of steering system.)

The main advantages of zero turn mowers are speed and maneuverability. You can reduce your mowing time by as much as 50% with a zero turn mower. Because the steering levers control each rear wheel independently, you can make the mower pivot kind of like a soldier doing an about face. This kind of maneuverability, combined with their faster ground speed, makes the zero turn mower much more productive. Plus they can be a lot of fun to drive.

Consider the terrain of your yard

Flat yards can be easily mowed with any style of mower

Hilly yards may require a self propelled walk behind mower to assist in climbing hills, though they are heavier overall. In some cases a lightweight push mower may still be easier to use.

Tractors and zero turn mowers can both handle hills but it is important to consider safety. The rule of thumb is that if your mower cannot back up the hill in reverse with the blades engaged, then it is too steep for the riding mower to mow safely.

Smooth lawns can be easily mowed with any style of mower.

“Country lawns”, as my dad liked to call ours, are rougher and more bumpy than a well manicured, smooth lawn, and are usually large enough that you will use a riding mower.

Lawn tractors or zero turn mowers will both do a good job. Zero turn mowers are faster, but lawn tractors may give a smoother, more comfortable ride. The prime consideration here is to get a mower that is a little more rugged than the basic entry level mower. The extra durability will more than pay for itself in longer life.

Where to Buy?

While there are plenty of places you could get your new mower, we recommend that you check out your local power equipment dealer. A mower dealership offers a number of advantages that big box stores and the internet can't.

1.) Information - Equipment dealers are specialists. They work on and use the equipment they sell. They stay up to date on new trends and innovations. They often have demo units you can test drive, and they understand what their equipment can and can't do and how best to use it. Which leads us to:

2.) Recommendation - Equipment dealers can help you choose the mower that fits not only your needs, but your budget as well. They can offer expert advice and suggestions that come from years of experience. And most dealerships can even offer 0% financing. And, finally:

3.) Service There's a saying; you can't hammer a nail over the internet. It's also true that you can't fix a mower over the internet. Anything with moving parts will, at some point, need maintenance or repair. Your local power equipment dealer has trained service technicians who work on your equipment right there in their shops and who stand behind their work.

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