

Is a Zero Turn Mower Right For You (And Your Yard)?

Over the last 15 to 20 years zero turn riding mowers have become increasingly common, both with commercial lawn services and with many homeowners. But many people still wonder if a zero turn mower is right for them and their yard. Here are the answers to a few of the most common questions we hear at our dealership.

What exactly is a zero turn mower?

A zero turn mower is a mower that can pivot, or turn around 180 degrees, and stay essentially in the same spot. Think of a soldier doing an about face. He is standing in the same place but now facing the opposite direction.

How do they work?

Each rear wheel of a zero turn mower is driven independently and controlled by the operator with a steering lever. The front wheels are caster wheels, just like the front wheels of a grocery cart. By controlling the speed of each rear wheel (and whether it is driving forward or backward) you can drive the mower forward, backward, or turn.

To drive forward, you push both levers forward together.

To drive in reverse, you pull both levers backward together.

To turn left, you push the right lever forward farther than the left lever (kind of like steering a bicycle)

To turn right, you push the left lever forward farther than the right lever.

To make a zero turn, you would push one lever forward and pull the other lever backward. This drives one wheel forward and one in reverse.

How do you stop?

Just move the levers to their middle, or neutral, position.

What makes a zero turn mower better than a traditional lawn tractor?

It's not a matter of being better than tractors. If you want to use attachments like snow throwers, plows, rototillers, buckets, etc., then a tractor is the way to go.

But for plain mowing, a zero turn mower is faster and more maneuverable. You will generally cut your mowing time in half and reduce the amount of trimming you have to do.

What makes them faster than a tractor?

There are three primary reasons that a zero turn mower is faster than a tractor:

- **Faster ground speed** - Tractors tend to have a 4-6 mph ground speed. Zero Turn mowers typically have a 5-10 mph ground speed
- **Efficient Deck** - Zero turn mower decks are designed to be able to cut well at higher ground speeds
- **More maneuverable** - Because zero turn mowers are more maneuverable you save a significant amount of time because you don't have to back and fill or make 3 point turns at the end of each pass or when you are mowing around obstacles like flower beds, trees, yard features, and lawn furniture. This enhanced maneuverability also means you can cut closer to objects and reduce the amount of trimming you have to do.

I need to haul stuff around the yard. Can I pull a cart with it?

Absolutely. Trailer hitches are a very popular attachment with these mowers.

I don't mow lawns commercially, I just mow my own lawn. Aren't those just for lawn services?

When they first came out, zero turn mowers were targeted toward commercial lawn services, but today almost every manufacturer makes models that are designed specifically for the needs (and the budgets) of residential users

How well do they work on hills?

Because of their low center of gravity, and wide wheel stance, zero turn mowers are very stable on hillsides. That being said, most manufacturers do not recommend operating them on slopes greater than 10 degrees. Also, avoid mowing on slopes where the grass is wet. A good rule of thumb for any riding mower is to try to drive up the slope in reverse with the deck in mowing position. If you cannot do that, it is too steep to mow safely.

How soon can you deliver it?

We do hear this one a lot, but you'll have to come in and see us to get the answer to that question.

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