



Guilford Gardening Journal

Timely Tips from a Professional Gardening Expert

WINTERIZING YOUR MOTORIZED YARD AND GARDEN EQUIPMENT

As owners of motorized lawn and garden equipment, you should perform necessary maintenance once you have finished using the equipment in the fall. Fuel system maintenance is the first thing that needs to be done to help ensure your equipment will start in the spring. However, if you desire to ensure the best service and longest life, there are several other steps you should take. It's best to follow the steps outlined in your operator's manual, but if you don't have your operator's manual, you can usually download a copy from the manufacturer's website by supplying your model number. If all else fails, here is a set of generic instructions.

FUEL SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

- There are two approaches to winterizing the fuel system for both two- and four-cycle engines. Both prevent residue from forming in the carburetor jets that can prevent the engine from starting.
- First method - the last time you use the equipment, simply run the engine dry to drain the gas tank.
- The second, and easier, method is to fill the fuel tank, add fuel stabilizer to the fuel, then start the engine and run it for five minutes. If you choose this method, be sure to perform all other maintenance before filling the fuel tank, since most maintenance requires draining the fuel tank before it can be safely performed.
- It is also a good idea to remove the spark plug and add a teaspoon of engine oil through the spark plug port, then replace the spark plug and pull the hand pull several times before replacing the spark plug wire.
- For four cycle engines, close the engine valves by

CLEANING

- Remove the spark plug wire before tackling this to ensure there is no way the equipment can start.
- Clean all dirt and chaff from the cylinder, the cylinder head fins, and the carburetor and linkage. Also remove debris from the air intake slots and the recoil housing. This will insure proper cooling and improve engine performance.
- For lawn mowers, remove grass clippings and dirt from under the mowing deck to prevent rusting. This can be done with a hose or by scraping with a wood or plastic scraper
- Also lubricate the throttle cable with silicone. Using oil will cause dust and other foreign material to stick to the oiled part.



OTHER DESIRABLE MAINTENANCE - (once spark plug wire is detached)

- For four-cycle engines, change the oil using SEA 30 unless your operator's manual calls for a different type. The oil has to be drained from some mowers from the bottom of the engine under the cutting deck, while other mowers are drained by tipping the mower and draining the oil from the fill tube. Recycle the used oil by taking it to an approved recycling center. Refill the engine with the proper grade of oil to the **FULL** mark on the dipstick. Over- or under-filling the engine with oil and running it can result in engine damage.
- Replace the spark plug and air filter. The correct part number can be found in the manual. If not available there, it is printed on most spark plugs and air filters. It is best to get the numbers from the operator's manual, since a part may have been replaced with a non-standard part. The gap on the new spark plug should be set to the manufacturer's specifications in the operator's manual.
- This is also a good time to sharpen the lawn mower blade. Before tilting the lawn mower on its side, be sure to remove the spark plug wire. Wear a pair of thick leather gloves or use a thick rag to hold the blade with one hand while loosening the restraining bolt with the other. Move the blade as little as possible to avoid future starting problems. *It is generally best to have the blade professionally sharpened.*

STORING YOUR MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT

- Store your motorized equipment in a cool, dry place. Do not store an engine containing gasoline in an enclosure with an open flame such as a furnace or water heater pilot light.
- If you plan to cover your equipment, be sure to use a cloth material so that moisture will not be trapped under it.

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Internet Resources

<http://bioenger.ag.utk.edu/Extension/ExtProg/machineryArticles/winterize.htm>

<http://extension.psu.edu/consumer-horticulture/gardening-questions/winter/how-should-i-winterize-my-lawn-mower>

<http://www.epa.gov/reg5oair/mobile/winter.html>

<http://news.consumerreport.org/home/2007/11/lawn-mower.html>

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