

# Shopping for lawn mowers is no simple proposition

Nearly six million walk-behind lawn mowers are sold each year. Below are answers to the most asked questions of lawn mower shoppers, according to The Toro Company.

• What are my choices? You'll find a wide range of lawn mower models and prices, ranging from bargain basement to more than \$700.

There are self-propelling and walk power mowers; side-discharge, rear and side-bagging and mulching models; pull start or key electric start features; safety systems and more to consider.

• How do I narrow my choices? Start with the critical component in the mower, the engine. You'll find three types of lawn mower engines today: Standard four-cycle, two-cycle and over-head valve (OHV) four-cycle engines.

The standard four-cycle is the highly durable longtime standard of the industry. But, in recent years, the two-cycle has grown in popularity. The two-cycle is smaller and lighter and has fewer moving parts to wear out or break.

The newest engine on the scene is the OHV four-cycle engine. Its technologically superior design provides extra cutting power, ease of starting and long life.

Remember, these upkeep tips about four and two-cycles: With separate oil and gas chambers, the

four-cycle will require occasional oil changes. You needn't change the oil on the two-cycle, but you will have to mix oil with each tank of gasoline.

• Will my mower start easily? This is the deepest fear of a lawn mower shopper. You can deal with your concern by asking the dealer to let you test-start a mower.

Also, ask if starting is part of the warranty. For instance, Toro's GTS line of mowers is guaranteed to start on the first or second pull for five years, or Toro fixes it free.

Key electric start options are available on some models. Add 15 per cent to the cost of the mower in return for the convenience of automotive-type starting.

• Is a self-propelling model right for me? A self-propelling model, with wheels that drive the mower while you guide it, is the perfect choice for those who don't want to push their mower back and forth across the lawn.

Some self-propelled models have various speed options. You may want to run your mower at a slower speed when trimming in confined areas.

When purchasing a rear-bagger, you may want to inquire about a rear-wheel drive, self-propelling version. Why? Because as the bag fills, the front wheels will lose drive traction.

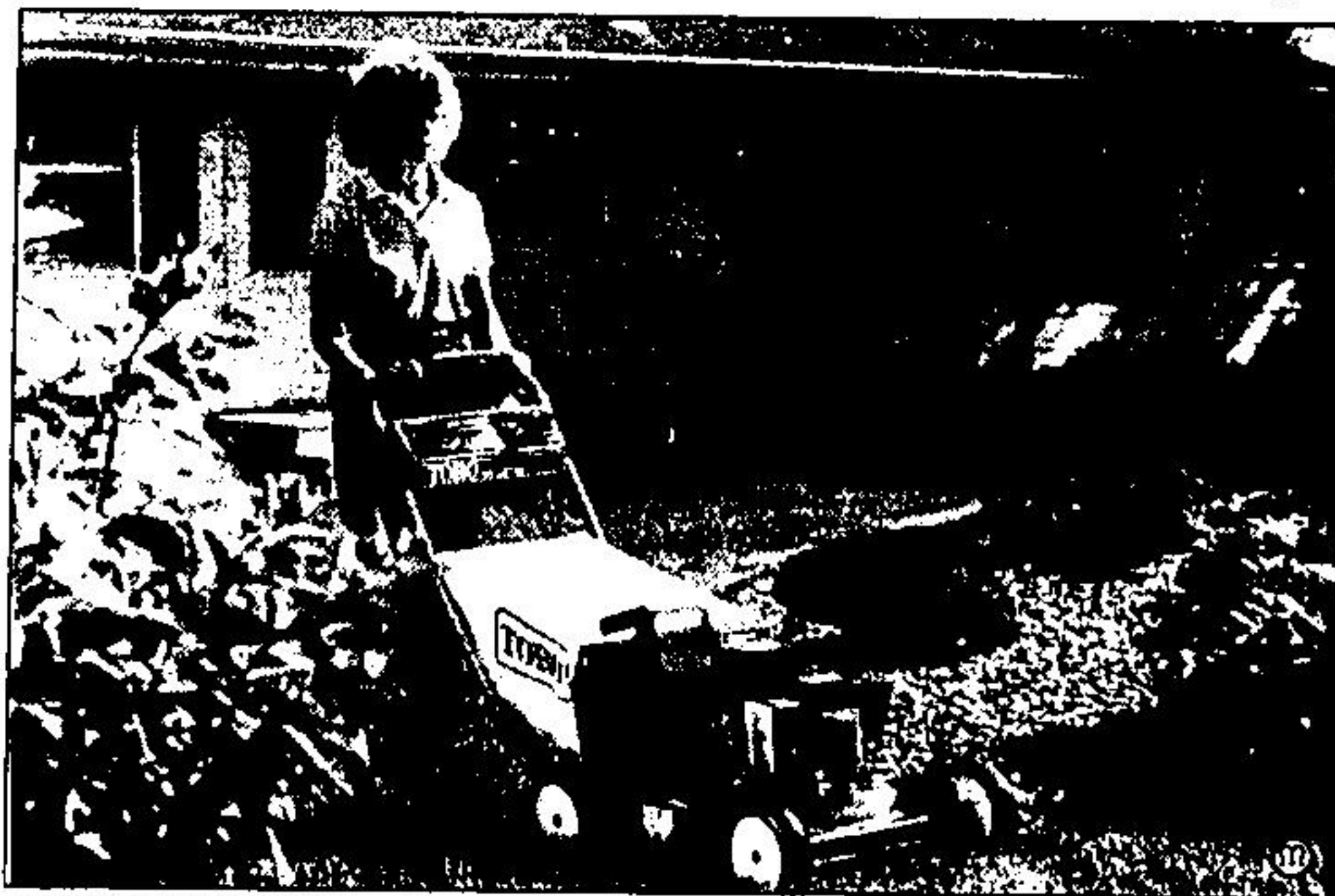
Side-discharge baggers are typically front-wheel drive and are easier to control. The operator must simply tilt the wheels up to stop and turn.

• Will the mower beautifully groom my yard? What you don't want is a mower that leaves tall blades of uncut grass called "stragglers", or forms a pattern of lines on your yard, resulting from the mower cutting lower on one side. A test drive can steer you clear of these models.

If you are able to arrange a test drive, mow a 20'-square test plot and eyeball the grass surface from your hands and knees to determine the quality of cut.

If the ability to pick up pine needles, shreds of paper and sticks is important, select a model with strong vacuuming power. Some models, including Toro's Vacuum Power line, are designed with unimpeded air flow for superior vacuuming power.

• What cutting width do I need? Consider first the layout and size of your yard. If your backyard is a maze of flower beds and obstacles, you might want a narrow width mower to make maneuvering easier. Mowers generally range in size from 17" to 22", with the 21" standard of many homeowners.



NEW GENERATION walk power models feature technological advances in starting ease, durability and safety.

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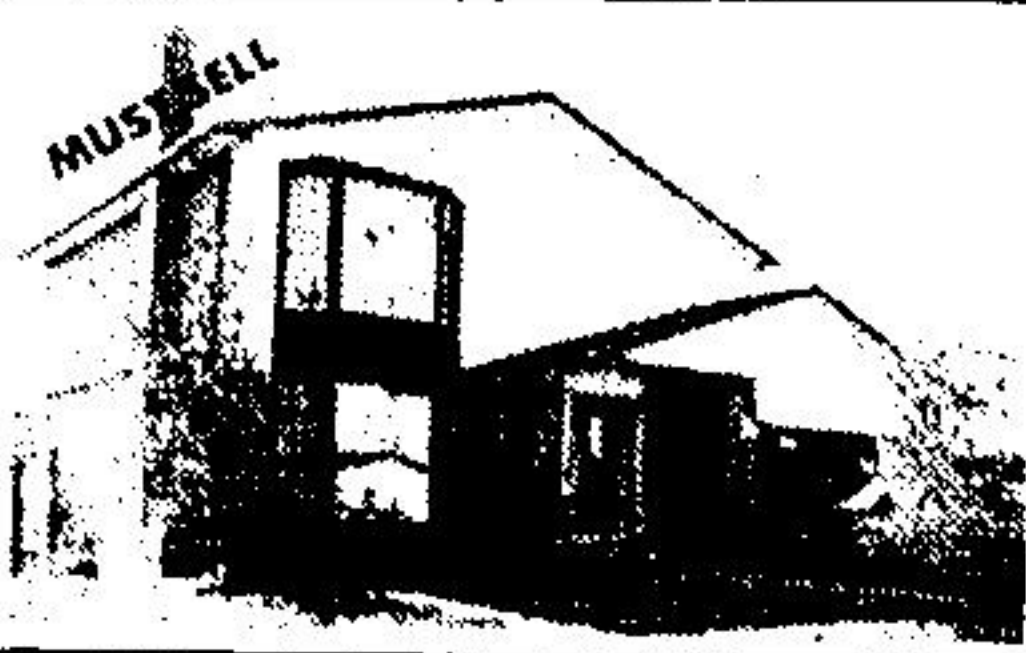
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