

A GOOD LINE

It might not get you a date, but a line trimmer will ease back pain by eliminating the need for stressful kneeling and bending to cut weeds or trim grass.

by Jeff Sobul, assistant editor

Oft times, brilliant ideas are born by accident. The line trimmer is no exception. Back about 17 years ago, George Ballas, a Texas real estate broker, got tired of the hairy weeds growing around the roots of two large oak trees in his yard.

So he went fishing for ideas and one popped into his head. He pulled an empty popcorn can out of the trash and poked holes for some nylon fishing line, then attached it to his long-handled power edger.

It was loud, he noted some years ago, but it did what he wanted it to do: rip grass and weeds from the oak's roots.

He called it the Weed Eater and set about marketing it. In 1972, his sales were a bit more than \$500,000. Over the next four years, they grew exponentially, to \$41 million in 1976. An industry was born.

Spreading like weeds

About two dozen companies in the United States manufacture, assemble and market string trimmers these days for both home and commercial use. **LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT** readers spent an estimated \$6 million on line trimmers in 1987. (This sales figure does not include the home market.)

Not surprisingly, trimmers have evolved and advanced immensely since their creation. Units are powered by electric cord and batteries in addition to gas-powered models.

Features that improve ease and efficiency of operation include automatic line feeders. The machines are safe, with line that tends not to cut skin, and debris guards to protect operators from flying detritus.

Why so popular?

Weed Eater was the first prototype nylon-line grass trimmer. The invention created a new product category that developed rapidly. More than 20 million Weed Eater gas and electric-powered lawn trimmers have been sold to professionals and homeowners, according to the company. (Fred Pascarelli of Homelite notes there is no real distinction in product



One of three trimmers from Bunton.

between homeowner and professional.)

In all, says Weed Eater brand manager Chuck Mattes, since the market began in 1972, total market sales have exceeded \$2 billion. Units sold have gone from zero to nearly equaling that of lawn mower sales per year.

"We had no idea how big the market would be," Mattes notes. The machines' original intentions were for people physically unable to get down on hands and knees or bend over to use hand clippers to trim or edge.

But with prices for electric trimmers starting at around \$20, trimmers became common sights everywhere. "If anyone's ever used a chain saw, they can use a trimmer," Mattes states.

Sales of gas-powered trimmers rose dramatically after prices were reduced, beginning around 1981 and taking off in 1983-84. Sales continue to rise between 10 and 20 percent annually. Mattes estimates that homeowners account for 80 percent of the market, but that is "a function of price." Pricier versions go to the professionals. "People who have to use them every day look at the features rather than the price," he explains.

Municipalities benefit greatly from the machines. "The trimmer adds a versatility they never used to have," Mattes says, saving time and labor costs in the process.

Market growth shows no sign of

slowing much either. Companies such as Solo continue to enter the market. In Solo's case it was to complement an already existing line of lawn grooming products, according to Solo's Jim Dunne. New technology such as the automatic feed heads featured on many new models will continue to add fresh ideas into the market. And, as Mattes notes, "there's always something new on the horizon."

The following is just an introduction to some established product lines and what has recently been introduced into the market by a number of companies:

Brushking—Brushking recently introduced the BK35 string trimmer with a 35 cc engine weighing in at 12½ pounds. It has a padded shoulder strap and handles four different Brushking monofilament line heads.

Bunton—Bunton has three trimmer sizes available with a choice of a tap string feed or manual string feed on each model. The smallest unit features an 18 cc Kawasaki 2-cycle engine and flexible type drive shaft.

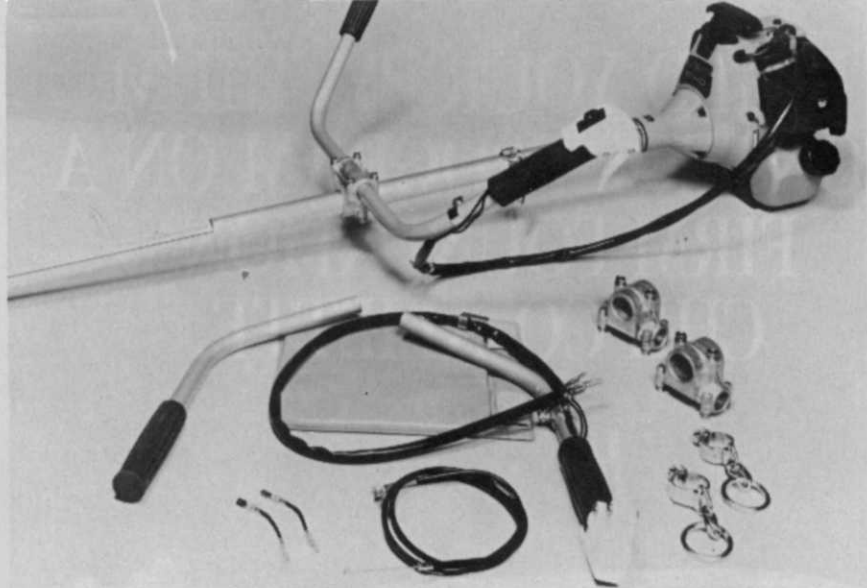
The larger commercial units feature solid drive shafts with heavy-duty reduction gear drives for long life. These models are available with electronic ignition and a 24 cc or 33 cc Kawasaki two-cycle engine. All models include shoulder strap, engine stand, on-off switch, tool kit and blade guard.

John Deere—The 110G, 210G, 240G and 260G are four new gas-powered nylon line trimmers and bushcutters developed by John Deere. All four trimmers are powered by a redesigned engine with a 21.2 cc displacement. This is an air-cooled, two-cycle single-cylinder power plant. A new carburetor for the 110G, 210G and 240G simplifies adjustments. Only the idle speed requires setting.

Models 110G and 210G cut a 16-inch path with a single-exit nylon cutter head and 0.080-inch-diameter nylon line. Shaft length is 48 inches. Models 240G and 260G cut a 17-inch path with a dual-exit nylon cutter head and



Deere's new 110G.



Echo's U-Handle kit.



Green Machine's new Expand-It System 3510.



Hoffco's JP260.

gine. Maximum horsepower is 1.2. The powerhead weighs 10 pounds.

The Panther Model 2840 String Trimmer/Brush Cutter was the first Expand-It System set of tools designed for landscapers and lawn service professionals. These are also interchangeable, easily attached to the single 24.1 cc, 1.3 hp power source using a single knob on the tool shaft.

The Panther series two-cycle gasoline engine (Model 2810) features solid state ignition, a recoil starter and a quiet-tone muffler with guard. The Model 2840 string trimmer/brush cutter combines the blower unit with a tool for those uses. The unit includes a 47.8-inch shaft and a standard debris and blade guard for safety.

Hoffco—Hoffco offers a number of trimmers for the commercial market. The Critter is a new trimmer with a 21.2 cc engine. It has solid state ignition and weighs 12 pounds. It features a monofilament tap-and-go head that automatically feeds new line without stopping.

The JP390XL is new for 1988. Its 30.5 cc two-cycle engine is geared for heavy use. The trimmer/brushcutter has a 57-inch shaft with a two-line monofilament head. A shoulder strap with warning banner, soft-sided goggles and fuel mix are also included.

Also new for 1988 is the JP260 which has a 21.2 cc engine and also has a 57-inch shaft. The JP260 also has a tap-and-go head with a steel debris shield.

Homelite—Homelite offers six straight shaft model trimmers and four curved shaft models plus a number of accessories. All seven ST models have 25 cc engines. The three HK models range from 18.4 cc to 33.3 cc. Weight ranges from the light weight ST-155 and ST-175 at 9³/₄ pounds to the HK-33 at 18³/₄ pounds. Translucent fuel tanks clearly show fuel level.

0.095-inch-diameter nylon line. Shaft length for the 240G is 55 inches; for the 260G, it's 59 inches.

Echo—Echo Inc has added a .105 line to its assortment of gas-powered string trimmers recommended for manual two-line heads only. Echo also offers .65, .80, .95, and .130 lines for its trimmers. The new .105 line is designed for moderately heavy cutting.

Echo has added an additional U-handle kit to its line of trimmer accessories. The handle kit now makes it possible for any 1986 straight shaft SRM trimmer/brushcutter to be fitted with a U-handle. The U-handle fits all 1987 straight shaft SRM models plus the SRM-250E. The existing U-handle kit fits models SRM-200DA through SRM-300AE and SRM-200 through SRM-200CE.

The Echomatic trimmer head is now standard on all Echo string trim-

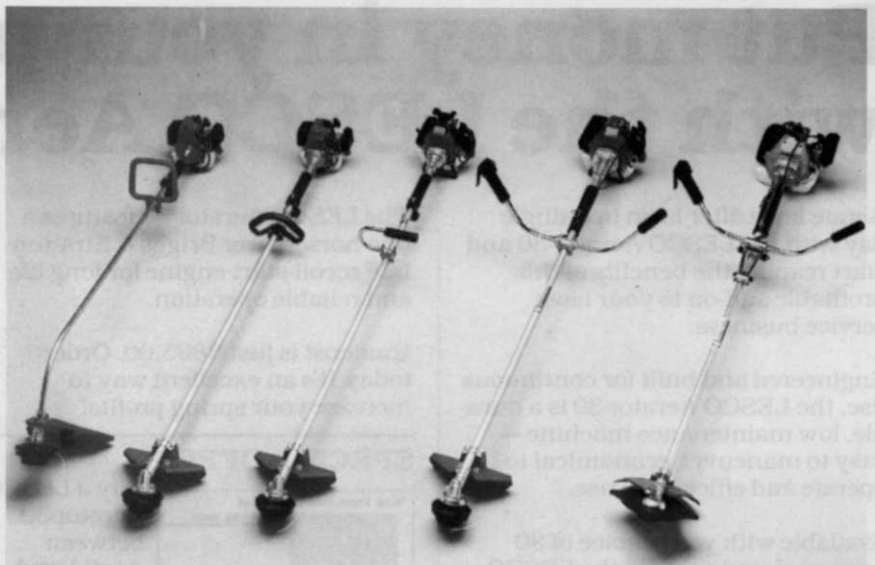
mer and brushcutter models. Lighter-weight Flexishaft trimmer models have the regular single-line Echomatic trimmer head. Larger straight shaft models have the heavy-duty Echomatic trimmer head with dual line feed.

Green Machine—HMC, maker of the Green Machine line of outdoor power equipment has introduced a heavy-duty version of their Expand-It system. The new Model 3510 offers landscape professionals high-powered performance in a light-weight, compact system. The basic string trimmer package easily converts to commonly used landscaping tools: a string trimmer/brushcutter, edger, power blower, weeder/cultivator and snow-thrower. All attach quickly to a single powerhead by adjusting two wing nuts.

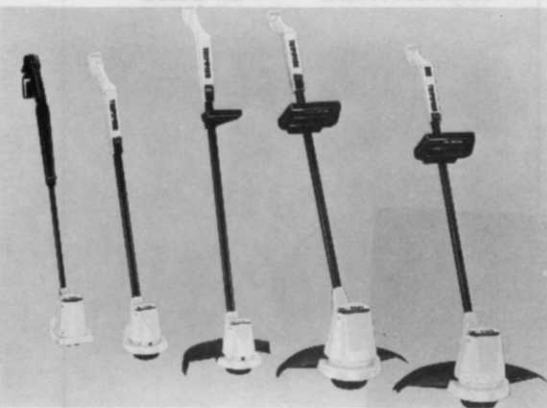
The powerhead is an air-cooled 24.1 cc, two-cycle Green Machine en-



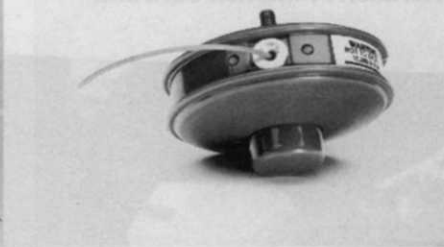
Homelite's gas-powered ST-485.



Maruyama's complete trimmer line.



Paramount's five new electric trimmers.



The Shindaiwa Bump 'n' Cut trimmer head.



Poulan's Weed Eater XR 125 trimmer/brushcutter.

The company also offers five electric power trimmers. All have automatic line feed and fully adjustable hand grips. Cutting swaths range from 10 to 16 inches.

Jacobsen—Jacobsen offers two models, the J-24 and J-33 string trimmers. The J-24 features a 24.1 cc engine, the J-33 a 33.3 cc engine. A shaft-mounted throttle trigger allows greater control of engine speed on both models. A tool kit is included with both models.

Lesco—Lesco offers two new string trimmers for the commercial market. Both feature two-cycle Fuji engines, the 30.5 cc 009500 and the 15.4 cc 009100. The 009500 has a 57-inch straight shaft with a two-line head and 15-foot spool. It weighs 14 pounds. The 009100 has a 48-inch curved shaft with a monofilament head with automatic feed and a 40-foot spool. It weighs 11.5 pounds. Lesco also offers universal replacement trimmer heads and line.

Maruyama—Maruyama offers a full line of string brushcutter/trimmers ranging from 18.4 cc to 40.2 cc featuring Kawasaki engines and Maruyama-manufactured Mitsubishi en-

gines. The brushcutters have been tested by the Japanese government to be the lowest in the market in vibration and noise, according to the company.

All Maruyama brushcutters feature electronic ignitions and diaphragm carburetors. All straight-shaft models have five rubber-encased brass bushings which eliminate shaft flex and vibration.

Paramount—Paramount recently introduced five new electric trimmers to its existing line. The trimmers range in cutting width from seven inches to 16 inches. Two other new models feature the motor in the handle for easier control.

Weed Eater—Poulan/Weed Eater has an extensive line of lawn and garden trimmers. The electric trimmer product line includes: Weed Eater 1208, 1210, 1212, 1214 and 1216. Gasoline-powered trimmers include: XR 20T, XR 50A, XR 80A, the new XR 125 trimmer/brushcutter, XR 200 trimmer/brushcutter, 1400T, 1600T, 1700A and the 1720A trimmer with blade kit.

Yard Pro trimmers carry a variety of upgraded amenities. New gasoline

models, the 115 and 145, have been added for 1987-88, as has a new electric model, the Yard Pro 16. Existing gasoline-powered models include: the Yard Pro 120A, 130A 160 and the 200.

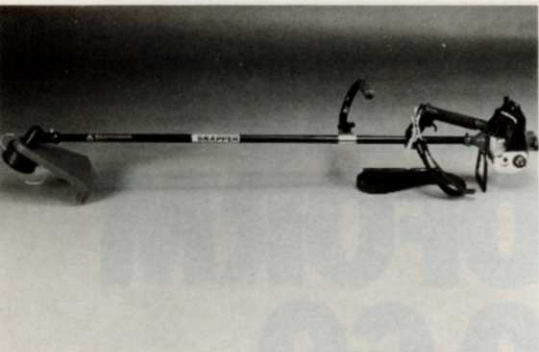
The company also offers replacement parts ranging from nylon line to blade kits and fuel caps.

Shindaiwa—Shindaiwa's T-20 trimmer features a 21.1 cc two-cycle engine and generates 1.1 hp, while weighing less than 10 pounds.

Shindaiwa also introduced two new nylon heads for its grass trimmers. The Japanese manufacturer also offers a complete range of professional trimmers and brushcutters.

The Bump-and-Cut head offers semi-automatic line indexing. Replacement line is easy to install. The compact Midget head features a quick-feed manual design for line indexing, which allows the user to advance line without loosening the arbor bolt.

TRIMMERS from page 54



The Snapper 210SS.

Snapper—Snapper's Model 240SS commercial trimmer features a 24.1 cc, two-cycle engine with a die cast steel connecting rod, chrome-plated cylinder, diaphragm carburetor and a 20-ounce fuel tank. The drive shaft is solid steel with five rubber-mounted bushings.

The rotatable gear head adjusts for slopes and allows the use of an optional edger attachment. The twin-line manual feed head is also standard. Other options available are a heavy duty steel shield, eight- and 80-tooth blades, a brush and sapling kit and bullhorn handles.

Solo—Solo Inc. recently entered

Solo's S-30SB trimmer/brushcutter.

the competitive string trimmer market by introducing five gas-powered models with a new 25 cc two-cycle engine designed and built for powerful and long-lasting performance.

The new trimmers include three curved and two straight-shaft models and feature a forged high alloy steel crankshaft for durability, ball bearings on the crankshaft to assure longer engine life and smoother performance, a special carburetor priming system and solid state electronic ignition. Each unit has fingertip controls,



The Tanaka Auto-Start 7000.

cushion-grip upper handle and a new "Tap-Vance" string advancing system with .080 monofilament line. Curved drive-shaft models are the: S-15CT with a 15-inch cutting swath, the S-17CT with a 17-inch cutting swath and dual line head, and the heavier S-25CB with an 18-inch cutting swath. The straight shaft units are the: S-20ST and S-30SB, both with a metal debris shield, 18-inch cutting swath and dual line heads.

Tanaka—Tanaka's Auto-Start 7000 gas-powered trimmer starts by turning the switch to on and pressing the start button. The 13-pound unit generates 1.1 hp and has rubber-cushioned handles. **LM**

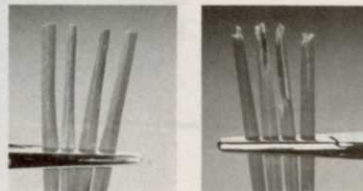


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