Grass mowers:
what are the choices?

Though the engine is only part of what you'll be pur-
chasing when you visit your lawn mower dealer,
it's an important part.

When buying new lawn mowers, the
landscape manager faces a variety of options, ranging from deck size to ground speed to mulching capabilities. Often over-
looked is the engine that is part of the
mower—a very important part, indeed.

Generally speaking, landscape man-
agers like the following attributes on their
lawn mower engines:

- easy starting;
- heavy duty, long life, dependable;
- quiet running;
- good guarantees/warranties; and
- fuel efficiency.

Also, make sure the most-serviced
parts on the engine offer easy access.

Time saved working on equipment in the
repair shop translates into a more dollar-
efficient business.

Most engine manufacturers are doing
their best to meet federal and California Air
Resources Board (CARB) engine emission standards before they officially go into effect (see Chart 1). The federal standards become
law in 1999.

Gary Wilson of Onan in Minneapolis,
Minn. says prospective buyers should also
look for broad range torque "for the power
to do the work at the widest variety of RPMs
possible."

Some of the options available include
piston cooling jets and full pressure lubri-
cation, Wilson says. The piston cooling jets
on larger engines (16 hp and up) can save
engine wear. And full pressure lubrication
will impact significantly on engine and
bearing life.

Other things to look for are electronic
starter (versus recoil) and large gas tank
capacity (for fewer refilling stops, resulting
in less downtime).

If you've got money to spend, an over-
head valve is a good investment. OHV
ingines deliver more horsepower with less
displacement and engine weight. They also
run cooler, with less carbon build-up and
longer life. According to some manufactur-
ers, OHV engines are up to 30 percent more
fuel efficient.

See Chart 2 for a list of the major players
in the domestic lawn mower engine market.

—Jerry Roche

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manufacturer</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>HP</th>
<th>Tank size</th>
<th>Shaft</th>
<th>OHV?</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Circle No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briggs &amp; Stratton</td>
<td>Quantum</td>
<td>4.0-5.0</td>
<td>1.0-1.6 qt.</td>
<td>vertical</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>electric start optional</td>
<td>301</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Indust. Plus</td>
<td>5.0-18.0</td>
<td>1.5-4.0 qt.</td>
<td>horiz.</td>
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<td>easy control system</td>
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<td>5.0-7.2 qt.</td>
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<td>auto-type air cleaner</td>
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<td>Honda</td>
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<td>vert. shaft optional</td>
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<td>Kawasaki</td>
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<td>FB460V</td>
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<td>FG series</td>
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<td>horiz.</td>
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<td>Magnum</td>
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<td>Onan</td>
<td>Performer</td>
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<td>no</td>
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<td>Elite</td>
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<td>Tecumseh</td>
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<td>Vector 5</td>
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<td>15HP OHV</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>best for lawn tractors</td>
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Source: Briggs & Stratton