

Tips

Trimmer Maintenance

Invest in good upkeep for long-term use

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With the advent of the under-\$100 trimmer (the kind you buy at The Home Depot), Pat Curtiss, vice president of technical and statistical services for the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, understands why superintendents treat trimmers as disposable items.

But because superintendents must always keep their courses in peak condition, Curtiss advises them to invest more money to buy sturdier machines. The result will be trimmers that last up to six times longer (three years), since the under-\$100 trimmer generally last six months under normal use on a golf course, Curtiss says.

"Superintendents can't behave like homeowners," Curtiss says. "Homeowners don't care if machines break and they don't replace them for a while. On the other hand, many superintendents must maintain their courses perfectly all the time. If their equipment goes down, that's harder to do."

There are other advantages to purchasing sturdier trimmers. Curtiss says a well-maintained trimmer will use less fuel and therefore cost less over the long haul. In fact, cost savings from fuel efficiency will pay for the initially larger investment in a more durable machine, Curtiss says.

"The industry has worked hard to lower noise levels and cut greenhouse gas emissions on trimmers to help users

meet tougher standards," Curtiss says. "But if you don't maintain them, you won't take advantage of those advances in trimmer technology."

Curtiss suggests the following tips for superintendents who want to keep trimmers in near-perfect condition:

- Use high-quality, two-cycle engine oil specifically for two-cycle hand-held equipment (where applicable). Lower grade oils or those for outboard boat engines will not provide sufficient protection.

- Add fuel stabilizers to the tank. Stabilizers can help fuel maintain a high-octane level for longer periods, giving easier starting and cooler engine performance.

- Disconnect the power and thoroughly clean outer surfaces. Clear all intake and exhaust vents.

- Empty vents, ducts, vacuum tubes and other attachments of debris.

- Before using the trimmer, carefully balance and adjust it for operator comfort and safety.

- Inspect the trimmer periodically for potential hazards: loose belts; missing or damaged guards; and accumulations of grass, leaves or excessive grease to reduce fire hazards.

- Seek the professional advice and/or service of a qualified service dealer for problems.

- Take your trimmer to an experienced service dealer annually for a safety and maintenance inspection.

- Hang or store according to manufacturer's directions. ■



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