

The Lightweights: Little Saws for Big Jobs

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USE and application of lightweight chain saws is well known to many members of the Green Industry who earn a sizeable percentage of their income with chain saws. But for those whose familiarity is limited to an occasional limb removal, merits of lightweight chain saw use should be carefully considered.

For starters, we will be "basic": why use a chain saw?

The casual user may submit just one reason: easier cutting. The commercial user sees this as a major factor, too, but he finds other benefits:

Faster cutting. For the man who must cut wood as part of his occupation, time is money. Where a golf course superintendent may want to lop a few branches, the commercial user may have five or ten trees to cut or trim, or several cords of firewood to prepare, and he wants to finish this task and move on to another. The chain saw provides a cumulative savings in time which can have practical workday values.

Versatility. A chain saw will handle probably any outdoor cutting of wood that can confront, for example, a nursery-

man or a golf course superintendent. It will cut any type of wood. And it can zip through the odd cutting job that crops up every so often.

Safety. The chain saw minimizes the body movement and exertion that, with a manual saw, can pose possible safety problems while working up in the branches of a tree.

If the merits of the chain saw have been established for the commercial user, the next decision is whether to buy gasoline or electric.

The first point to emphasize is that, when both types are the same size and power output, there is no difference in cutting ability.

The first and most obvious difference between the two is accessibility to the job at hand. This of course eliminates the electric-powered chain saw from many applications. And the much greater portability of the gasoline-powered saw has advantages even where a source of electricity is available.

The electric, on the other hand, has advantages where its use would be indoors or in or near public areas. It's quieter and has the merit of not producing exhaust fumes.

Some more pro's and con's on the electric saw:

- There's no problem in starting nor with the possibility of running out of fuel . . . worth consideration when the job at hand is in an awkward location such as up in a tree.
- The electric chain saw generally is less expensive at retail than the gasoline; maintenance also will tend to be less expensive.
- On the negative side, distance from a power source has another limiting effect on the use of an electric chain saw. It operates best within the limits of a 100-foot extension cord. Beyond 100 feet voltage begins to drop, and beyond 150 feet the saw will not provide consistently effective cutting.

Special features in today's lightweight chain saws contribute to

their versatility and make them an even more efficient partner in heavier cutting operations.

Gasoline models, and some electric chain saw models, have a centrifugal clutch which disengages if the chain gets bound in the cut, a periodic occurrence when cutting large-diameter trees and branches. This clutch action . . .

- reduces the chance of kick-back;
- reduces possible risk when working in a tree;
- reduces load on the saw and thus helps prolong its life.

Another 'plus' in modern lightweight chain saws is their fuel capacity. With certain models the operator has up to 15 or 20 minutes of cutting time available, an attribute which permits railroad or power line right-of-way work far from the base of operations.

How big a chain saw is needed? Almost all chain saw work in the applications considered here can be handled by 10, 12, 14 or 16-inch cutting bars. The effectiveness of today's saws means that a chain saw with a 16-inch bar will make an efficient 16-inch cut, and an efficient 32-inch double cut. □



A 100-ft. extension cord gives a good bit of mobility — and utility — to a light-weight electric chain saw.



Positioning of the cutting bar on this 16-in. gasoline chain saw enables the operator to cut close to the tree trunk.