

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



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Tips for Working Safely with Electric Garden Tools

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take the time to read and make sure you understand all instructions provided with your power garden tool. Instruction manuals typically contain the following key information: assembly instructions, safety procedures, appropriate use of extension cords, instructions for use, maintenance and storage.
- Inspect all tools before and after use. Broken or missing parts, frayed cords, broken switches or malfunctions of any kind invite injury. Be sure blades, mono-filaments or other attachments are sharpened and/or installed properly.
- Never disable or remove safety guards, or other related parts of the tool.
- Be well rested, alert and relaxed before attempting to work with power tools. You will be less prone to danger and will do a better job.
- Avoid distraction. Children playing near the work site, friendly neighbors, pets and other interruptions can cause injury to both operators and others in the vicinity. "Getting in the way" of the work, flying debris or mental distractions are often contributing factors.
- Work with adequate lighting. Trying to squeeze in one more job at twilight after a hard day's work is an invitation for trouble.
- Do not operate any mechanical garden tools in rain, wet or damp conditions.
- Wear suitable clothing, including long pants and sturdy footwear. Shorts provide no protection against scratches or flying debris. Avoid loose clothing, jewelry or hanging long hair that may catch in machinery or fall into the path of work. Also, wear appropriate protective gloves if recommended in the power tool's instruction manual.
- Wear a dust mask when working in dusty conditions. Depending upon the amount or type of dust created, a lung-protecting respirator may be needed. Seek advice from a knowledgeable supplier for the proper protection for your application. Consult with your physician before using masks or respirators if you have respiratory ailments.
- Wear certified safety goggles or safety glasses with side shields. If the work you are doing creates flying debris, wear an additional face shield.
- Loud noises created by power tools can damage your hearing. Wear approved ear plugs or hearing protectors, which look like headphones, to reduce sound pressure levels. Placing cotton in your ears is not adequate.
- Keep the tool's power cord and extension cord out of the pathway of the tool.
- Keep a firm footing on the ground and do not over-reach when using tools.
- Avoid accidental starting. Keep hands away from power switches when carrying or resting with a tool that is connected to a power source.
- Make adjustments to or remove foreign materials from tools when power is safely disconnected.
- Do not leave tools unattended, even for a moment. A tool, particularly one that is connected to a power source, can attract a curious person, resulting in disastrous results.
- Store tools correctly, safely and out of reach of children.



In addition to these general rules, observe these specific tips for the following equipment:



Electric Chain Saws

- Thoroughly read and understand the instructions that come with chain saws. Due to their complexity in operation, adjustments and maintenance, strict adherence to the provided instructions and guidelines is mandatory
- Keep the power cord and extension cord clear of the cutting area at all times.
- Do not cut using the nose or tip area of the guide bar. Serious kickback can result.
- Work at ground level only, cutting limbs below mid-chest height. Never work on ladders or up in trees.
- Always hold the chain saw firmly with two hands.
- Don't work alone. Use the buddy system. Never, however, have someone else hold the wood as you cut it.

Mono-Filament Weeders/Trimmers

- Use only the manufacturer recommended mono-filament replacement line. Never substitute an alternative size mono-filament or a metal wire cutting line. Severe body lacerations could result.
- Trim only grass, weeds and low growth, non-wood ground cover. Never use it for vine trimming.
- Keep feet out of the tool's pathway when operating.
- Never use a trimmer in an upside-down position or placed at an extreme angle.
- Never use this tool to sweep debris from the ground, pathways or driveway.
- Unplug the tool when unjamming the mono-filament cutting line.
- Never work with the guard removed.
- Review the owner's manual for proper direction of tool movement as it relates to the rotation of the mono-filament cutting line.

Edge Trimmers (Edgers)

- Be sure to clear rocks and other debris away from the area to be trimmed. The blade's high rotational speed can propel objects with massive force.
- Trim only in a forward direction using short, jabbing strokes. Do not edge by pulling the edger backwards; the tool is designed to move forward only.
- Stand directly behind the tool when in use to prevent potential flying objects from striking you.
- Be careful not to strike edges of pavement with the rotating blade. Doing so may result in flying debris, premature blade wear and pavement damage.
- Never attempt to cut large roots. Dangerous kickback, loss of control and thrown objects can result.

Hedge Trimmers

- Maintaining proper footing and balance is extremely important when using a hedge trimmer. Overreaching is extremely dangerous. Use ladders with extreme caution.
- Keep both hands on the tool during operation. Never use a hand to secure material to be cut, or hold back or remove material while cutting.
- Never drape the power or extension cord over a hedge or shrub being trimmed. Keep cords behind you and out of the way of the cutting blades. Power line cut-through is a common accident.
- Never use this tool near power lines.
- Exercise extreme caution when working near fences or other objects that can come in contact with the cutting blades. The trimmer may jam, objects may be thrown and injuries may result.

Electric Lawn Mowers

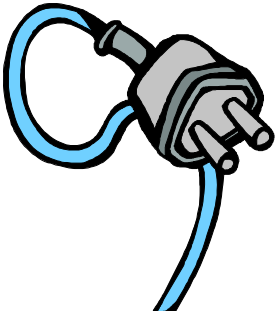
- Before mowing, inspect the lawn for stones, twigs, toys or other objects that could be thrown by the blade, causing personal injury or damage to the mower.
- Wear closed-toed, hard-soled shoes, long pants and eye protection.
- Never mow wet grass.
- Make certain you are using the recommended extension cord. Inspect it regularly to be sure that it is in good condition. Keep it out of the cutting path.
- Always unplug the mower when it is unattended.
- Always unplug the mower before making any adjustments, repairs or cleaning.
- When cutting grass, never pull the mower towards you.
- Mow across slopes, never up and down them. Do not mow excessively steep slopes.



Extension Cords Outdoors

- When using outdoor tools and appliances, use only extension cords labeled for outdoor use. Use UL (Underwriters Laboratories)- listed extension cords and electrical devices.
- Do not use extension cords or power tools in rain, wet or damp conditions. Never allow extension cords to run through water.
- Extension cords should be used only as a temporary source of power. Disconnect and store properly when not in use.
- Plug three-pronged grounded extension cords in grounded receptacles only. Do not use ground adapters as an adequate ground may not be established.

Extension Cords Outdoors - continued



■ Current electrical codes now require outdoor and garage receptacles to be ground fault protected. This provides the greatest electrical shock protection. Consider having ground fault circuit interrupter receptacles (GFCI's) or other suitable ground fault protection installed by a licensed electrician. If the circuit you are using

is not ground fault protected, portable and extension cord-type GFCI's can be temporarily installed between the receptacle supplying power and the extension cord in use. Follow directions for correct application. Like extension cords, they can be disconnected and stored after use.

- Never exceed an extension cord's maximum wattage rating, which is dependent on both the size of the conductor (wire gauge size) and the length of the cord. Note the wattage rating listed on the power tool to determine electrical power requirements. In addition, refer to the instructions provided with a specific power tool for individual recommendations on appropriate wire gauge size and maximum length. Using heavier than recommended gauges (e.g. 12 gauge rather than 14 gauge) is fine, as these recommendations note minimum electrical requirements. Heavier gauges, in fact, ensure minimal energy loss over the cord's length.

- Uncoil extension cords when in use to allow for proper heat dissipation.
- Use the shortest extension cord possible to do a particular job. The longer the cord, the more electrical energy loss occurs in the form of heat. Do not buy a 100 ft. cord with the intention of having to purchase only one cord to meet all possible applications around the yard. Purchase shorter length cords for projects closer to a receptacle. In many instances, a 25 ft. cord length is sufficient.
- Disconnect the extension cord immediately after use. Avoid coiling the cord for storage by wrapping it around your arm. This winding action tends to twist the conductors inside, promoting premature cord failure. Instead, use an extension cord storage holder for a shorter cord or an extension cord reel for one of longer length. The holder is a flat, plastic frame on which the cord wraps around. The reel is similar to a garden hose reel. Both are sold with recommendations for the maximum gauge and length of cord that they will hold.

NOTE:

Although these safety tips are particularly appropriate to electric garden tools, much of this information is also applicable to other home and garden power tools, either electric or gas powered.

Source: Wayne Torgersen, Extension Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County