Make sure your outdoor power tools are ready to go

Source: Andy Rideout, UK extension horticulture agent

Before you crank up your mower, tiller, weed eater or blower this spring, you need to make sure they are ready to go. Did you leave gasoline in any of your power tools over the winter? If this happens this spring when you go to crank it up, you may need a skilled mechanic to clean the tank and carburetor. Gasoline can leave a gummy residue inside your equipment’s carburetor and fuel tank that may cause them to break down over time. The residue gets sucked into tiny holes inside the carburetor and stops it up. Always be sure to drain the fuel at the end of the season and add fuel stabilizer to the tank.

We often neglect our equipment during the year while we are using it regularly. Before the season begins, be sure to drain the old oil and replace with a fresh oil change. Add the new oil according to manufacturer’s specifications and include a new filter if necessary. Be sure to properly dispose of the used oil.

The air filter is the most often overlooked and without question, the most important maintenance item, on many pieces of equipment. An air filter ensures only clean, dust free air enters the combustion chamber. Filters may either be disposable or the washable sponge type. Wash with warm water and a small amount of soap. Be sure to rinse and allow it to thoroughly dry, then add some engine oil to the sponge, as the oil will allow the sponge to collect dirt and debris even better.

Be sure you look over your equipment for signs of wear, like worn or rusty cables. Some lubricating oil can help rusty cables tremendously before they get stiff and break. Clear any debris or build up on the tines of your tiller, or around the blades of your mower. Clean equipment runs much better. Don’t forget to clean around the engine. It produces a lot of heat, wearing down the metal and decreasing the engine’s life. A dirty engine retains more heat than a clean one.

Look at the underside of your mower. Grab the blade, pushing it up and down and turning the blade in the opposite direction that it normally turns. If there is any movement, you could have bad bearings in the spindle. Repairing them now could save you from more expensive repairs later.

These maintenance items are fairly simple and can add to the life of your equipment. You may need a skilled mechanic, which can be more expensive, or you might even be able to do the repairs yourself. Either way, get some advice from a local repair shop for recommendations.

Contact (YOUR COUNTY) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service for information on equipment maintenance.

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