

Winterizing Your Lawn Mower

It's a mighty long winter here in the North Country. The elements take their toll on many of our tools including the lawn mower. Pulling the rope on the recoil starter with futile results is no way to start your summer. They're short enough around here as it is! Here are a few questions for you to consider. If you can answer "yes" to them, the chances are your mower will be a *Happy Camper* in the spring.

Did you drain the old gas out of the tank and carburetor?

- It was important to do this because "old" gas molecules break apart and really gum up the works. This makes for a cranky machine in the spring.
- Remove all gasoline from the fuel tank. Use a plastic turkey baster to remove most of the fuel from the tank. Then start the engine and allow it to run dry. (**NOTE: Make sure the engine is cool, that there are no open flames, and that you put the fuel in an approved fuel container.**)
- (**an option**) If you don't want to do that, or if your engine has a diaphragm carburetor such as a chain saw, add a recommended amount of a fuel stabilizer into the last tank (or even two tanks) of fuel. You can buy this product where you bought your lawn mower.

Did you change the engine's oil?

- After the final use and when the engine is still hot, drain out that old oil. The hot (or at least warm) oil is loaded with dirt particles and needs to go.
- Drain it into a container and then take it to a gas station to be recycled.
- Be sure to add nice new oil to the full mark. Do not overfill!
- Use an SAE #30 detergent oil as recommended by the owner's manual.

Did you clean the outside of the engine and mower?

- Make sure the mower is cooled off, then, give it a bath with your garden hose. Get all that old dirt and grass off.
- Consider using an engine cleaner available in an aerosol can. Follow directions on the can. I generally spray the entire unit, let it sit for a few minutes and then rinse it off making sure the rinse water doesn't get into stream water.

Did you clean the underside of the mower?

- The best time to do this is before you put the new oil back in.
- Tip the mower on its side and really give it a good going over. Get all that old composty looking grass out of there.
- Use a putty knife, wire brush or what ever else it takes to give this area a good cleaning.

—Notes—

What I Need:

- Manual
- Fuel Stabilizer
- Quart of Oil
- Wrench to remove oil plug
- Gunk Engine Brightener
- Putty Knife
- Wire brush
- Old Blade
- New Blade
- Block of wood
- Gloves
- Box-wrench to remove blade
- Socket alternative
- Screwdriver to check balance
- File
- WD-40
- Air Filter cartridge

Did you sharpen the blade?

Observe the following precautions:

- 1. Remove the sparkplug wire** - You know what can happen when someone plays with an "unloaded" gun.
- 2. Use gloves when handling the blade** - The blade will have sharp edges that can cut your hands.

- Remove the blade by removing the bolt that holds the blade. You might need to use a piece of wood to keep the blade from turning. Use a box-end or socket wrench of the proper size to fit the bolt.
- Thoroughly clean the blade and inspect it for cracks, nicks, bends where you don't want them, or excessive wear. Replace the blade if necessary.
- Sharpen the blade with a file making sure to keep the original beveled cutting edge. Use the same number of strokes on each end of the blade while sharpening. (See figure "A")
- Check the balance on the blade. Insert a screwdriver through the center hole and set the blade parallel with the ground. It should remain in this position. If it moves from this position, it is unbalanced and should be replaced. (See figure "B")

Did you put the blade back on correctly?

- Make sure the curved edges of the blade face upward. (See figure "C") Use the original washers if there are any and the original bolt. Be sure that the blade is centered.

Did you clean the air filter?

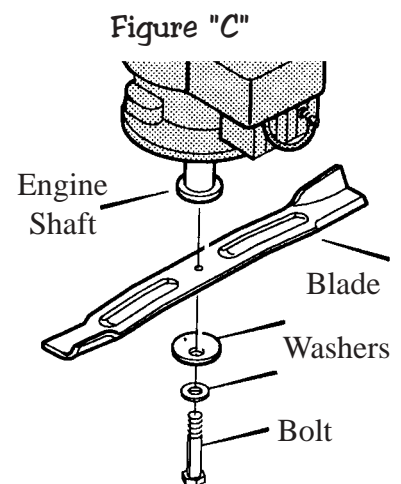
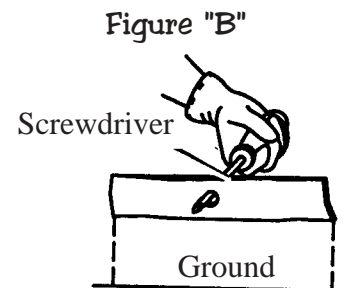
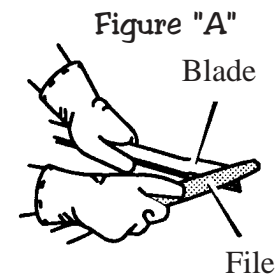
- Remove the filter. Some engines have a throw-away filter element but many have a foam element that can be rinsed clean in gasoline. If this is the case add a little engine oil after cleaning, give it a loving squeeze to get the oil all over the foam and then put it back in its case. If you have a throw-away filter, replace it if it appears dirty. It is very important for your engine to get lots of nice clean air!

Did you prevent internal cylinder rust?

- Remove the spark plug preferably using a sparkplug wrench. Squirt a little oil or WD-40 down the hole. Stuff a rag in the hole and pull the starter cord a couple of times. This will coat the inside of the engine and prevent rust from forming. Then remove the rag and put the sparkplug back in.
- If the sparkplug is a few years old, consider treating your mower to a new one. It could save some strain on your old back muscles! Leave the spark plug wire off until spring.

Next spring . . .

- Reconnect the sparkplug wire.
- Fill the fuel tank with fresh gasoline that is being stored in an approved container. Don't use fuel left over from last year!
- Recheck the oil level. While it should be fine, strange things happen over the winter.



— Notes —