

Garden Products / Small lawnmowers



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DID YOU KNOW?
The lawnmower was invented in 1830 by Edwin Beard Budding

The perfect cut

Geoff Hodge tests a range of small electric lawnmowers to help you achieve your own Wembley-lookalike lawn

LOVE it or hate it - proper mowing is the most important factor in having a good lawn. That means it's essential to have a good mower that can give a quality cut and finish.

Electric mowers are the most popular for most people, especially those with a small lawn. They're lighter than petrol mowers, there's no chance of running out of fuel and no engine to maintain. Their main drawback is their trailing cable, so you need to mow carefully and keep an eye on the cable.

When choosing a mower, your first question will be its width of cut. To help make the choice, mowers with a 35cm (14in) wide cut are suitable for lawns up to 300sq m (360sq yd). Another thing to bear in mind is how easy it is to move around - how heavy it is and whether it's easy to carry. Mowers with wheels are much easier to transport around the garden than hover mowers without wheels.

For most average lawns a rotary mower will produce a more than

acceptable cut; the other type, cylinder mowers, are best for quality, bowling green-type lawns.

I have only tested wheeled mowers, some of which also have a rear roller to give those all-important stripes; the heavier the mower and the roller, the better the stripes.

I don't think there is any point in buying a mower that doesn't collect the clippings. There are times, such as when there's a drought, that leaving very short grass clippings in place can be a good thing as they act as a mulch. At all other times, if there's no collection system then you spend more than twice the time raking up and collecting the clippings than you do mowing. Some of the mowers have a mulching facility.

The test

I tested the mowers on normal length grass and some long grass. They all dealt well with both conditions and there was no discernible difference between them.

However, the more powerful the motor, the better it will deal with

really long grass - the more power, the more blade revolutions per minute, so the better the cut.

So, I concentrated on other features and how easy each mower was to use.

Suppliers

AL-KO
01963 828055
www.alkogarden.co.uk

Bosch 0844 736 0108
www.bosch-pt.co.uk

Flymo from Husqvarna UK
0844 844 4558
www.flymo.com

Gardena from Husqvarna UK
0844 844 4558
www.gardena.com

Qualcast
0844 736 0108
www.qualcast.co.uk

Wolf-Garten from E P Barrus
01869 326409
www.wolf-garten.co.uk

Worx, 0845 202 9679
www.worxtools.com
From B&Q and Argos only.

AL-KO 34E Comfort

£124

Cutting width 34cm (13½in)
Motor size 1200W
Rear roller No
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 37-litres with full indicator
Cutting heights 6 heights, 2.8-6.8cm (1-2½in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 15kg (33lb)
Cable length 16m (53ft)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other features Sliding handle cable holder
Guarantee 3 years



STYLISH MOWER WITH A HANDY CABLE HOLDER

Bosch Rotak 36

£139.99

Cutting width 36cm (14¼in)
Motor size 1400W hi-torque Powerdrive motor
Rear roller Yes
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 40-litres
Cutting heights 10 heights; 2-7cm (¾-2¾in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 11kg (24lb 3oz)
Cable length 12m (40ft)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other features Grass combs for close edging
Guarantee 2 years



CHOOSE FROM 10 CUTTING HEIGHTS FOR PRECISE MOWING

Gardena PowerMax 36E

£130

Cutting width 36cm (14¼in)
Motor size 1500W Power Plus motor
Rear roller Yes
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 40-litres with clear window to see when full
Cutting heights 5 heights, 2-6cm (¾-2½in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 13.5kg (29lb 11oz)
Cable length 15m (50ft)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other features Three-in-one cutting system to collect, mulch or discharge the cuttings; fully folding handles
Guarantee 2 years



A WIDE CUT AND A ROLLER FOR A QUICK, NEAT MOW

Qualcast Easi-Trak 320

£79.99

Cutting width 32cm (12½in)
Motor size 1000W hi-torque Powerdrive motor
Rear roller No
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 28-litres
Cutting heights 3 heights, 2-6cm (¾-2½in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 7kg (15lb 6oz)
Cable length 10m (33ft)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Guarantee 5 years parts, 2 years labour



THIS MOWER WAS THE LIGHTEST AND EASIEST TO CARRY

Flymo Multimo 340XC

£120

Cutting width 34cm (13½in)
Motor size 1500W
Rear roller Yes
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 40-litres with vision window
Cutting heights 5 heights, 2-6.5cm (¾-2½in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 12.8kg (28lb 2oz)
Cable length 15m (50ft)
Other features Fully removable cable with integral storage in grassbox
Ease of carrying, moving around

Guarantee 1 year



NEAT, GOOD-LOOKING MOWER WITH USEFUL CABLE STORAGE

Wolf Compact Plus Power Edition 34E

£199

Cutting width 34cm (13½in)
Motor size 1400W
Rear roller No
Grass collection Woven grassbag; 35-litres with full indicator
Cutting heights 5 heights, 2-6cm (¾-2½in); actual heights marked on mower body
Ease of adjustment
Weight 15kg (33lb)
Cable length 15m (50ft)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other features CCM system (cut & collect or cut & mulch); folding handle; sliding cable holder; soft rubber handle
Guarantee 10 years



EASY TO ADJUST AND STORE AND IT MULCHES GRASS, TOO

Battery mowers

Where a trailing electric cable can be a problem, but you don't want the expense of a petrol mower, what about a battery-operated mower? In recent years these have come a long way and are as good as mains electric models.

The actual area cut on each

battery charge depends on the length of the grass and how thick it is. In the test, as well as cutting grass, I also ran the battery flat without actually cutting the grass. I've been using a battery mower for the last three years and have been very impressed with it.

Worx WG783E

£149.98



The mower's IntelliCut system maintains cutting efficiency even in dense, tough grass. It has two modes: Quiet Mode, best for short grass and Turbo Mode, for dense or overgrown grass.

Cutting width 33cm (13in)
Motor size 24-volt battery
Battery charging time 2½ hours
Run time Quiet Mode, 2 hours, Turbo Mode 45 minutes
Rear roller NO
Grass collection Woven grassbag; 30-litres with full indicator
Cutting heights 3 heights, 2-6cm (¾-2½in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 14kg (30lb 13oz)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other features Soft foam handle grip
Guarantee 2 years

Bosch Rotak 34 LI

£269.99

This mower uses a lithium-ion battery, which is the latest in battery technology; it holds its charge, has no discharge and doesn't suffer from battery 'memory effect', which ensures the long life of the battery.



Cutting width 34cm (13½in)
Motor size 36-volt battery
Battery charging time 1 hour
Run time 35 minutes
Rear roller Yes
Grass collection Rigid plastic grassbox; 40-litres
Cutting heights 10 cutting heights, 2-7cm (¾-2¾in)
Ease of adjustment
Weight 12.8kg (28lb 2oz)
Ease of carrying, moving around

Other feature: Grass combs to cut closer to walls and edges as they guide the grass towards the blades; soft foam handle grip
Guarantee 2 years

A PRECISE MOWER WITH A QUICK CHARGE TIME



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Carol Klein's cottage garden diary