

Shopping for a String Trimmer Made Easy

(ARA) - According to "Consumer Reports," more people buy string trimmers each year than any other type of outdoor power equipment. After all, they are a necessity when it comes to tackling tall grass and weeds and providing the finishing touches on a manicured lawn.

But with aisles lined with string trimmers of different styles and brands, it's easy to see why consumers may be a little overwhelmed or confused when it comes to selecting one.

To make the task a little less daunting, experts suggest keeping the following guidelines in mind to ensure that the right string trimmer is chosen for the yard chores that lie ahead:

* Is it a quality product?

Well-made equipment makes yard chores easier, while many homeowners find themselves frustrated with the limited power, difficult starting, shabby design and numerous product breakdowns of cheaper versions. Typically, middle- to higher-priced equipment lasts longer and is more structurally sound. Make an investment in a premium product with superior technology, like a state-of-the-art 4-cycle engine, to ensure a satisfying lawn experience.

* Does it provide easy starts?

Consumers often complain about the effort it takes to start their equipment. To avoid aggravation, look for a string trimmer with an advanced starting system, like the Craftsman 796140 featuring an Incredi-Pull Starting System with MAX FIRE Ignition or the Cub Cadet CC4105, CC4127 and CC4175 models with a Swift-Start system. In general, string trimmers with 4-cycle engines will likely start easier than their 2-cycle counterparts -- thanks to a spring in the starting system that reduces the amount of pulling effort required.

* Can the line spool be easily changed?

With today's technology, replacing a line spool shouldn't be difficult. If it looks tricky in the store, it will most likely be frustrating at home. For ease and convenience, try Troy-Bilt 4-Cycle Curved Split Shaft Trimmers featuring a SpeedSpool Bump Feed Replacement System. Or choose a fixed line head that allows for quick line replacement by simply inserting precut lengths of line into the head with nothing to take apart or wind.

* Are there any special features?

One of the hottest trends today in lawn and garden equipment is "convertible" equipment allowing users to change a product's function with versatile attachments. Looking to blow away clippings after you trim? The Troy-Bilt TB575SS 4-Cycle Straight Shaft Trimmer has a built-in EZ-Link Attachment System so users can turn the trimmer into a blower or many other products in a matter of seconds.

* How does it feel?

For a more comfortable experience, look for a string trimmer that is not only lightweight, but also has good balance and evenly distributes weight. Try Cub Cadet's CC5075 4-Cycle String Trimmer with an over-molded D-handle suitable for comfortable right- or left-handed use. And because comfort is also affected by vibration, 4-cycle engines are designed to significantly reduce vibration that can lead to hand fatigue and other medical problems.

* How will the equipment be used?

Straight shaft trimmers are designed to effectively trim under shrubs and low branches, while curved shaft trimmers typically offer easier maneuverability and less weight. Consider the landscape in which the string trimmer will be used to help determine the appropriate shaft style.

* What will the neighbors say?

If neighbors are in close proximity, the noise level of a string trimmer should be considered. As opposed to a 2-cycle engine's 95 decibel level (comparable to a motorcycle), opt for a 4-cycle product with a lower operating tone and typical decibel ranges of 75 to 79.

* Is it environmentally friendly?

Although EPA standards get stricter each year, there are still differences in the emissions of various string trimmers. Overall, 4-cycle engines emit half the emissions of a standard 2-cycle engine. And with a cooler running engine, users can expect increased fuel efficiency of approximately 25 percent.

String trimmers today come in all shapes and sizes, and there isn't just one model that's right for everyone. Homeowners should consider their personal lawn objectives and the characteristics and features most important to them when selecting a string trimmer. As manufacturers become increasingly aware of consumer needs, trimming has become more pleasurable and easy -- shopping for one should be too!

For more information on premium 4-cycle string trimmers, please visit www.mtdproducts.com