



east coast lumber

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Winterizing Your Lawn Mower

By Dan Rogers – Manager of the East Coast Lumber Equipment Center

The key to having a lawn mower that starts right up in the spring is by properly winterizing it before you put it away. This prepares your mower for the long winter months it will remain idle and makes it ready for you when you need it in the spring.

Remove or Stabilize the Fuel

A mower used at the end of the season needs to be emptied of fuel. First, drain or siphon the gas tank dry. If the gasoline you've been using in the mower over the summer has a fuel preservative, you can store it until next spring or run it in your snow thrower. If the gasoline has not had a preservative added to it, you need to use up the gasoline as soon as possible. Allowing it to sit over the winter will cause the ethanol in the gasoline to separate and its other chemical components to degrade.

The alcohol in the fuel dissolves plastic and rubber parts in the fuel system. It also attracts moisture, which leads to the corrosion of metal parts. Even if the engine escapes damage, it experiences a loss of performance from chemically degraded fuel because ethanol-based gasoline can spoil rapidly, often separating into layers of alcohol and fuel. Once you've emptied everything, restart your mower to let it burn through any remaining gas. If fuel lines are easily accessible, you can disconnect and drain them to ensure that the mower is as fuel-free as possible over the winter. This is the most important step to ensure your mower starts right up in the spring.

Lawn Mower Maintenance

You should give your mower a thorough cleaning before the winter. Remove and sharpen the mower blade. Apply a light film of oil to it and reinstall it. Disconnect the spark plug lead, tip the mower over, and clean the underside of the deck with a wire brush and a putty knife.

Remove the spark plug and apply a few drops of oil into the cylinder. Pull the recoil handle several times to ensure that this film of oil is evenly distributed on the wall of the cylinder. Replace the spark plug with a new one.

Clean or replace the air filter. Wipe the top of the mower deck clean. Lubricate all exposed cable-movement points and pivot points using a good-quality spray lubricant, like [Fluid Film](#) or [WD-40](#). Change the mower's oil. Be sure to check the operation and maintenance manual for what type of oil to use.

Lastly, remove the battery from your machine and store it in a climate controlled area to avoid freezing.

Battery-Powered Lawn Mowers

If you've got an electric or battery-powered mower, there is no need to fiddle with the motor. Just remove the battery, place it in the charger, and follow the above steps for maintaining all the moving parts of the mower. You'll also want to make sure the deck and wheels are clean of dirt and lawn debris.

Check the charging requirements from your battery manufacturer before leaving the battery in the charger throughout the winter.