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11 easy ways to prepare a lawn mower for winter storage



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Care for your lawnmower in the fall for optimal condition in the spring. (MCT, MCT / October 9, 2013)

By Jody Lamb
 7:43 p.m. EST, November 6, 2013

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To ensure your lawn mower is in shape for next season, there are things you need to do now to prevent costly repairs and downtime come spring.

"After a long mowing season, you may be tempted to just wheel your lawn mower into your garage or shed and drop a blanket over it and forget about it until the mowing season arrives," said Jeff Linderman, RepairClinic.com's landscaping and outdoor power equipment specialist. "That's a very common but potentially destructive and expensive mistake. A few simple maintenance steps completed now will dramatically reduce the likelihood of engine failure and expensive repairs when you need your lawn mower again."

Here are 11 easy ways to prepare a lawn mower for winter or off-season storage:

- Read the lawn mower owner's manual.**

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- Clean the deck and undercarriage.** A hose, putty knife and car wash detergent are sufficient tools for clearing grass and debris from the deck and undercarriage. Clean it down to the painted metal.

- Degrease.** Spray a degreaser on oil stains. Allow the degreaser to sit for 10-15 minutes before wiping with a clean cloth. Rinse with a hose.

- Check the blade and replace, if needed.** Look for bends, dents and other damage to the blade. To prevent risk of injury, the blade should be replaced right away if any damage is found. A blade should be sharpened every season and replaced every one to three years, depending on usage. Only the blade recommended by the

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manufacturer should be used.

•**Clean the fuel cap.** Use a paintbrush to brush away particles and buildup on the fuel cap. Before closing the fuel cap, inspect the vent for blockage and replace it if there's blockage.

•**Replace the spark plug.** "A spark plug should be replaced at least one per season, even if it appears to be working fine," said Linderman. Over time, a spark plug's performance will degrade due to carbon build-up and a weakened electrode. This degrades engine performance and requires the engine to use more fuel.

•**Spray lubricant on any bare metal undercarriage parts to prevent rusting.**

•**Clean or replace the air filter.** Air filters prevent debris and dust from entering the lawn mower's carburetor and engine. Foam filters may be cleaned with water and a small amount of detergent, but there is high risk of tearing. Pleated, paper air filters are known to deteriorate quickly so replacement is recommended.

•**Replace the fuel filter.** There is high risk of to fuel filters if cleaned so replacement is recommended.

•**Replace the oil.** "Engine oil should be replaced at least once per season or every 25 hours of use," said Linderman.

•**Add fuel stabilizer.** Adding fuel stabilizer to fresh fuel prevents carburetor build up or clogging. Follow the owner's manual for instructions on leaving fuel in the engine during storage, as this varies by manufacturer.

Lamb is public relations manager for RepairClinic.com.

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