



# Lawn and order

Best Buy lawnmowers plus our tips on tackling weeds and how to keep your grass in good shape

At one time, you could leave cutting the lawn until late March or April. By mid-summer it was often hot enough to stop the grass growing, so you could put your feet up again.

In the last couple of years, though, our lawns have carried on growing almost all year. You may have already got the old mower out a couple of times this year and be cutting the grass every week until well into the autumn. All this

means you may be thinking of buying a new machine.

Lawnmowers have developed in recent years. There's now a rechargeable cordless mower we can recommend and petrol mowers that can tackle long, tough grass, yet are a cinch to start compared with older models. Electric mowers packed with user-friendly features can convert quickly from collecting the clippings to mulching. This

involves chopping the clippings into tiny fragments and recycling them back into the lawn, which not only saves work but helps feed the grass.

If you want to take green gardening a stage further, you could abandon powered mowers altogether and go for a hand cylinder model. These are light and efficient and a big step forward from the heavy, clattering machines of old.

## What you should look for

### HANDLES

Folding handles make storage easier. Look for handles that fold twice to sit on the mower top. The Flymo Pac a Mow (7) fits in its grass box. Some mowers allow you to adjust the height of the handles

### CUTTING HEIGHT

A wide cutting range (12-70mm) is good if you cut lawns of different qualities or heights. A single height adjuster is easier than adjusting each wheel

### REAR ROLLER

This gives a striped effect and is easier to balance when you cut edges. Some mowers have four wheels with a roller that works at lower cutting heights only

### LONG SWITCH

Most models have a bar the width of the handle or a double switch to let you use both hands and save wrist strain. It helps left-handers, too

### GRASS COLLECTOR

A big collector saves on trips to the compost heap. Some have a window in the top or an indicator to tell you when they're full

### MULCHING OPTION

Mulching mowers re-cut clippings into tiny pieces and blast them back into lawn. As they break down they help feed the lawn. Some have a plate that blocks off the outlet to the grass collector; others have a knob you turn to convert the mower from collecting to mulching



## How to buy



### Finding the machine for you

#### Choose the right mower

The wider the mower, the quicker you'll cover the lawn. But for small lawns, a mower that's too large is difficult to manoeuvre. As a guide:

#### ■ Lawns up to about 50 sq m

An electric mower with a 30cm cutting width is ideal.

#### ■ Lawns up to about 150 sq m

Choose an electric mower with a wider cut, 35-45cm.

#### ■ Lawns up to about 250 sq m

A small petrol mower is the best option; they start at 40cm wide.

#### ■ Lawns over 250 sq m

Look for a petrol mower with a wider blade, 46cm or more. On the largest, self-propelled, models, a motor powers the wheels.

### Types of mower

We've looked at wheeled rotary mowers because these are best for a family lawn. They are better on longer grass, most models collect clippings and some give a striped finish. Choose from electric or petrol in a range of sizes. There is also a rechargeable cordless machine.

As well as wheeled rotary mowers, there are two other types. Hover mowers have a rotary blade and float on air. They're mostly small electric models. Some collect clippings, but basic models don't. They're good for awkwardly shaped lawns where ease of use is more important than a quality finish.

Cylinder mowers have moving blades that cut against a fixed blade. They can be electric, petrol or hand-pushed. They're good on frequently cut lawns but struggle with longer or rougher grass.

**1 ELECTRIC**

## 74% Wolf-Garten Compact Plus 37E Power Edition £174

This model is nippy and easy to move round. It excelled on damp and rough grass, but did less well on normal grass. It's fairly heavy but handles make it easier to carry. The grass collector is easy to use. The single-blade height adjuster has a scale to show height. Cheapest online.

**WE LIKE** A switch lets you convert easily from collecting to mulching.

Available Online Roller No Cut width 37cm Mulch Yes

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

**3 ELECTRIC**

## 72% Flymo Multimo 360XC £130

This mower's features include a single-handed cutting-height adjuster, a two-handed switch and rear roller that works at lower cutting heights. It also converts from collecting to mulching. It performed as well as other Best Buys, except on short grass. It's cheapest at Argos.

**WE LIKE** There's a cable reel built into the grass box.

Available Argos, Homebase Roller Yes Cut width 36cm Mulch Yes

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

**2 ELECTRIC**

## 73% Al-Ko Bio Combi 470 £224

This very large mower was quick on a standard lawn and gave a neat finish. It comfortably tackled long, rough and damp grass, and was surprisingly easy to move around, despite being as heavy as a petrol mower. However, it's too big for a typical back garden (with a 46cm cutting width) and its lowest cutting height was too high for a fine ornamental lawn. The handle height was easy to adjust. Cheapest online.

**WE LIKE** The controls are easy to use.

Available Online Roller No Cut width 46cm Mulch Yes

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

**4 ELECTRIC**

## 71% Bosch Rotak 40 £150

The Rotak 40 has a powerful motor but is light for its size. It was quick on a normal lawn, excellent at cutting edges and good on damp and rough grass. However, it was only average on short grass. The grass collector is tricky to empty and we felt that it should be able to hold more than it does. It's cheapest at B&Q.

**WE FOUND** The rear roller gives a perfect striped finish.

Available B&Q Roller Yes Cut width 40cm Mulch No

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

## Hand cylinder mowers

Using one of these can be surprisingly light work

A hand cylinder mower can be a good choice, especially if you have a small garden. There are no cables to worry about or petrol to top up. You'll also be spared the whirring noise of powered machines that is such a familiar sound on summer evenings. And cylinder mowers cut grass blades more cleanly than rotary models.

There are some drawbacks. Pushing a hand mower, even one of today's models, through dense, long grass can be hard work. We also found that most weren't that good at collecting the clippings. Still, it's worth considering whether some exercise once a week will leave both you and your lawn in trim.

*Which? Gardening* has tested these recently and the Best Buys are:

**Brill Razorcut Premium 33** (33cm wide, £95 plus £28 for the grass collector) and

**Husqvarna Novocut 64** (41cm wide, £80 plus £15 for the grass collector).

The Brill  
Razorcut  
Premium 33

Husqvarna  
Novocut 64





**5 ELECTRIC**

## 70% Toro Eurocyclor 21091 £200

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

The Toro is easy to use, despite being fairly heavy for an electric mower. We like the push-button cutting-height adjuster, and the handle height is easily altered. However, it didn't cut as well as the other Best Buys and wasn't great on normal grass.

It can switch from collecting to mulching clippings. Cheapest at B&Q.

**WE FOUND** It's compact when stored, as the handle folds twice.

Availability B&Q Roller No Cut width 41cm Mulch Yes



**15 CABLE-FREE**

## 69% Bosch Rotak 37Li £300

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

If you don't like trailing wires round the garden, this could be the answer. It was brilliant in all tests, especially damp and long grass, easily matching electric Rotaks. The grass combs let you cut to lawn edges. The battery lasts more than 22 minutes when charged (enough to cut 450 sq m of typical lawn) and took only an hour to recharge. Cheapest at B&Q.

**WE LIKE** Well-placed carry handles make it easy to move about.

Availability B&Q Roller Yes Cut width 37cm Mulch No



**16 PETROL**

## 73% Champion Premier RL534SPH £300

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

This cut a normal lawn better than almost every model on test. For such a large mower, it's easy to use because of its greater width and excellent finish. It's self-propelled but harder than some Best Buys to manoeuvre because of its size. It struggled on edges and is unsuitable for short grass. It was easy to adjust cutting and handle heights. Cheapest at Focus.

**WE FOUND** The collector is small.

Availability Focus Roller No Cut width 51cm Mulch No



**17 PETROL**

## 73% Honda Izy HRG415PD £249

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

This user-friendly petrol mower starts effortlessly. It breezed through all the tests. The collapsible fabric grass catcher and full-width switch are useful. It has a plastic flap rather than a roller which gave a faint stripe on the standard lawn. Its blade height adjusters are stiff, though, and you can't adjust handle height. Cheapest online.

**WE LIKE** It was best on rough grass.

Availability Online Roller No Cut width 41cm Mulch No



**18 PETROL**

## 71% Hayter Spirit 41 £270

WHICH?  
**BEST BUY**

This robust model breezed through our tests apart from damp grass, when it struggled. It's easy to adjust cutting height with a single lever that has seven clear positions. The collector had a good capacity and was easy to use. The machine wasn't as manoeuvrable as some, but was easy to line up because the wheels are flush with the sides. Cheapest online.

**WE FOUND** It's heavy but easy to push.

Availability Online Roller No Cut width 41cm Mulch No

The Champion is one of the best performers on a standard lawn

## Worth considering

This previous Best Buy is still the best mower on test if you have a smaller lawn

The Bosch Rotak 34 (6) is the best smaller mower and the simplest to use. It is particularly good at cutting right up to the lawn edge, thanks to the lawn combs and inset front wheels. It was good on damp, rough and short grass. The grass collector is big for a small mower, though not as easy to empty as some. This is a light mower and comes with useful carrying handles and a roller to give a neat, striped finish. Our only quibbles are the uncomfortable single-handed switch and the awkward height adjuster. It's available from Argos, B&Q, Focus and Homebase. **SCORE 67% £100**



## How to mow



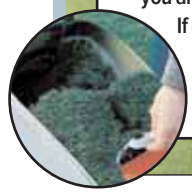
Mow little and often – weekly unless it is too cold or dry for grass to grow. Cut it to about 25mm (find the nearest height setting on your mower). Mow when the lawn reaches half as long again as the height you want it, to avoid cutting too much at once. For a typical family lawn, mow when it reaches about 40mm.

Don't mow when it is raining. Ideally, wait until the grass is dry, although most mowers will cope with damp grass if you can't.



If grass is very long, at the start of the season or after a holiday, set the mower to its highest cutting height. Reduce it gradually each week until you are back to the usual setting. Mowers rated ★★★★★ for long grass should have no problem cutting long grass back to 25mm in one go if necessary.

Collect clippings at the start of the season or if the grass is long. Mowers with a mulch option allow you to recycle clippings back into the lawn to help feed it. This is best when you are cutting frequently.



If dead grass starts to build up in the turf, revert to collecting the clippings.

In dry spells, raise the cutting height to avoid stressing the grass and leave the clippings on to help conserve moisture.



If you usually mow up and down in the same direction, try mowing occasionally at right angles to cut clumps flattened rather than cut by the mower. Rake with a wire lawn rake before mowing, which will help raise uncut clumps.

## Tips for the perfect lawn

■ **EDGES** The ideal tool to cut a crisp edge against a border is a lawn edging iron (or half-moon cutter). Once you've got a decent edge, cut any overhanging grass occasionally with lawn-edging shears. Our Best Buys are Burgon & Ball Telescopic Edging Shears (£24.99) and Wilkinson Sword Long Handled 421770 (£29.99).



■ **HARD SURFACE** If the surface is hard, spike or remove cores of soil with a hollow-tine aerator, then brush sharp sand into the surface to improve drainage.

■ **RAKING** If the surface feels springy, this could be due to a build-up of moss and dead grass. Rake vigorously with a wire lawn rake or a powered rake to get rid of this.

■ **PATCHY** If your lawn is patchy, especially after raking out moss or killing weeds, scatter lawn seed evenly over the whole lawn. Brush it into the soil surface and water if it's dry, then use netting or bird scarers to keep birds off for a week or two. Our Best Buy lawn seeds are British Seed Houses So-Green (£6.99 for 500g) and EverGreen Multi Purpose (£15.99 for 2kg); Johnsons Easy Lawn (£8.99 for 500g) includes a tiny clover, which gives a dense, dark green lawn.

■ **CALL THE EXPERTS IN** If you don't want to do more than mow the lawn once a week, you can pay specialists to do jobs such as weed and feed treatments, raking and improving aeration. We found the two largest lawn maintenance firms, GreenThumb and TruGreen, offer a good service at a reasonable price. Treatments start at about £13 for up to 100sq m.

## DEALING WITH WEEDS

### Best Buys and how to keep your grass in a good condition

If you are collecting the grass clippings and putting them on the compost heap, you will need to feed the lawn once a year or so. This keeps grass growing strongly, helping it fill in bare patches and out-compete weeds.

Most of us can live with the odd daisy in the lawn, but if weeds, particularly the small creeping ones, start to take over, it's time to act. While larger weeds like daisies and dandelions can be dug out, creeping ones will need a one-off lawn weedkiller treatment. You can combine this with nourishing the lawn by using a

lawn weed and feed.

If some weeds survive this treatment you can follow it up with a lawn weedkiller on its own. A ready-to-use spray is an effective way to mop up any odd surviving weeds. Once the weeds are under control, aim to prevent them by encouraging healthy grass (see right) or digging out the more obvious weeds as they appear.

If moss is also a problem – the lawn will feel spongy – a combined lawn weed, feed and moss killer can do all three jobs. The most recent *Which?* Gardening Best Buy lawn weeds and feeds are:

#### ■ LAWN SPOT WEEDER

Bayer Garden Advanced Lawn Weedkiller Ready to Use (£3.99 for 1 litre – treats 20 sq m); B&Q Lawn Weed Killer Extra (£3.48 for 1 litre – treats 20 sq m).

#### ■ LAWN FEED AND WEEDKILLER

EverGreen 'Feed & Weed Liquid for your Lawn' (£5.49 for 1 litre – treats 100 sq m).

#### ■ LAWN FEED, WEED AND MOSS KILLER

EverGreen Soluble 'I Want Complete Lawn Care' (£3.99 for four sachets – treats 40 sq m); Tesco Lawn Feed, Weed and Moss Killer (£6 for 3.5kg – treats 100 sq m).

## CARING FOR YOUR LAWMOWER

**A new machine can be expensive, so it makes sense to take good care of it**

■ **CLEANING** Clean the blade enclosure after use. This prevents a layer of dried grass building up, which will affect how well the machine cuts. Use a stiff brush for electric mowers (unplug from the mains first) or a hose or pressure washer for petrol.

■ **DRAIN THE FUEL** When you've finished using a petrol mower for the season, drain the remaining fuel. The following season, start with fresh petrol. Check the spark plug and replace if necessary and check the oil level regularly.



■ **SAFETY** Always use a circuit breaker with an electric mower and check regularly that the cable and connections are not damaged in any way.

■ **SHARPEN THE BLADE** With all rotary mowers, sharpening the blade will improve performance considerably. Use a metal file or take it to a specialist dealer. If it is badly burred, you should be able to buy and fit a replacement easily.



## How we test

**Why we start cutting the grass in winter, and how we put lawnmowers through their paces**

February may seem an odd time to start cutting the grass but we need to start early to fully test the new models that you're seeing in shops in spring.

Our testers use each mower to cut a series of 30 sq m test areas of grass typical of a back garden lawn, with grass around 40mm high.

The mowers are set to cut as close to 25mm (the recommended height for a family lawn) as they can. In addition, we assess how well each mower copes with less regular tasks: longer grass – 80-100mm high, the result of leaving it uncut for a summer holiday, say – and damp grass, because sometimes you haven't got time to let it dry out.

We check how well mowers cope with rough



grass, such as a wild flower meadow cut only a couple of times a year, a short, purely ornamental lawn, and lawn edges.

We also assess how much the machine's grass collector can hold.

Each of the mowers also gets rated on 24 tests of how easy they are to use: from moving to the

lawn, set up, mowing, controls, the grass collector, through to cleaning and storing.



### USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

#### Specification

**Price** For Best Buys, we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. If we couldn't find them at major high-street shops, we give the most common online price. Prices for other models are a guide.

#### Features

**Rear roller** Rollers

produce a striped finish. **Propelled** Shows which models have powered wheels so you don't have to push. **Cutting height setting** The number of heights you can set the mower to cut grass at.

#### Test performance

**Normal grass** 30 sq m of regularly mown lawn cut from 40-50mm to 25mm. We rated for speed, quality of finish and weight of clippings collected. **Damp grass**

30 sq m of standard lawn cut when damp. We rated ability to cope. **Long grass** 30 sq m of standard lawn left to grow to 80-100mm, then cut to 25mm. **Rough grass** An area of grass cut a couple of times a year, from 150-200mm to 60mm. We rated ability to cope. **Short grass** Fine lawn cut from 30mm to as close to 12mm as possible, rated for closeness and neatness. **Lawn edges**

We cut 10m along a soil border and 10m along a fence and rated the quality of finish. **Grass box capacity** During the long grass test, the maximum weight of clippings collected before the collector needed emptying. ★★★★★ equates to more than 4kg; ★★★★ 3 to 4kg; ★★★ 2 to 3kg; ★★ 1 to 2kg. **Ease of use** We rated mowers in 24 categories from ease of assembly and

MODEL	PRICE (£)	REAR ROLLER
<b>ELECTRIC</b>		
1 <b>WOLF-GARTEN</b> 37E Power Edition	174	
2 <b>AL-KO</b> Bio Combi 470	224	
3 <b>FLYMO</b> Multimo 360XC	130	✓
4 <b>BOSCH</b> Rotak 40	150	✓
5 <b>TORO</b> Eurocyclor 21091	200	
6 <b>BOSCH</b> Rotak 34	100	✓
7 <b>FLYMO</b> Pac a Mow	80	✓
8 <b>BLACK &amp; DECKER</b> GR389	80	
9 <b>MOUNTFIELD</b> E I46HP	170	
10 <b>FLYMO</b> Easimo Plus	55	
11 <b>BLACK &amp; DECKER</b> GR298	70	
12 <b>FLYMO</b> Visimo	70	
13 <b>B&amp;Q</b> Electric Rotary	30	
14 <b>FLYMO</b> Rolleremo	60	✓
<b>CORDLESS</b>		
15 <b>BOSCH</b> Rotak 37Li	300	✓
<b>PETROL</b>		
16 <b>CHAMPION</b> Premier RL534SPH	300	
17 <b>HONDA</b> Izy HRG415PD	249	
18 <b>HAYTER</b> Spirit 41	270	
19 <b>FLYMO</b> Quicksilver 5145HW	279	
20 <b>MOUNTFIELD</b> 460PD	319	
21 <b>MOUNTFIELD</b> Multiclip 501	218	
22 <b>FLYMO</b> Quicksilver 46S	150	

SPECIFICATION						WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						CONVENIENCE		SCORE %
PROPELLED	CUTTING WIDTH (cm)	CUTTING HEIGHT (mm)	CUTTING HEIGHT SETTING	CABLE LENGTH (m)	WEIGHT (kg)	NORMAL GRASS	DAMP GRASS	LONG GRASS	ROUGH GRASS	SHORT GRASS	LAWN EDGES	GRASS BOX CAPACITY	EASE OF USE	
	37	20-60	9	19	16	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	74
	46	30-80	7	16	29	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	73
	36	20-65	5	15	12.8	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	72
	40	19-70	6	15	13.2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	71
	41	16-75	6	12	20	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	70
	34	20-70	6	12	11	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
	33	20-60	3	12	14.3	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	59
	38	25-60	3	12	15.5	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	55
	46	19-70	5	14	24	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	54
	32	20-60	3	10	9	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	50
	30	25-60	3	12	11.8	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★	47
	32	20-60	3	10	9	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	47
	32	30-65	3	6	13.4	★★★★	★	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★	★★★★	44
	32	20-60	3	10	9	★★★★	★★	★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	44
	37	35-70	7	n/a	13.9	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	69
✓	51	22-75	5	n/a	33.9	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	73
	41	15-68	6	n/a	26.4	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	73
	41	13-65	7	n/a	29	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	71
✓	51	26-92	7	n/a	31.2	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
✓	46	18-60	5	n/a	26.7	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	62
	48	26-70	5	n/a	27	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	59
	46	18-75	5	n/a	25.1	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★	★★	★	★★	★★★★	47

setting up, comfort of handles and controls, manoeuvrability, carrying and emptying grass collector to storing and cleaning.

#### Score

Ease of use	50%
Normal grass	20%
Long grass	7.5%
Damp grass	5%
Rough grass	5%
Edges	5%
Grass box	5%
Short grass	2.5%

## Contacts

**Al-Ko** 01963 828000  
www.alkogarden.co.uk

**Argos** 0870 728 7777  
www.argos.co.uk

**B&Q** 0845 609 6688  
www.diy.com

**Bayer** 0845 345 4100  
www.bayergarden.co.uk

**Black & Decker**  
01753 567055  
www.blackanddecker.co.uk

**Bosch** 0844 736 0108  
www.bosch.co.uk

**Brill** 029 2079 5888  
www.manualmowers.co.uk

**British Seed Houses**  
01522 868714  
www.britishseedhouses.com

**Burdon & Ball**  
0114 233 8262  
www.burdonandball.com  
**Champion (Focus)**  
0800 436436  
www.focusdiy.co.uk

**Flymo** 0870 609 1901  
www.flymo.co.uk

**GreenThumb**  
0800 011 1222  
www.greenthumb.co.uk

**Hayter** 01279 723444  
www.hayter.co.uk

**Honda** 0845 200 8000  
www.honda.co.uk

**Husqvarna** 01453 820300  
www.husqvarna.co.uk

**Johnsons** 01386 791113  
www.johnsonslawnseed.com

**Mountfield** 0845 600 3207  
www.mountfield-online.co.uk

**Sovereign (Homebase)**  
0845 077 8888  
www.homebase.co.uk

**Tesco** 0800 505555  
www.tesco.com

**Toro** 01480 226800  
www.lily.co.uk

**TruGreen** 0116 275 9000  
www.trugreen.co.uk

**Verdone Extra/EverGreen**  
01386 791113  
www.lovethegarden.com

**Wilkinson Sword (Fiskars)**  
01656 655595 www.wilkin-  
sonswordgarden.com

**Wolf-Garten** 01495 306600  
www.wolf-garten.com

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