

GEAR LAB

Pick the Right Mower

Increased power and maneuverability make it easier than ever to find a cutter that fits your lawn.

by SAL VALICIA



BEST FOR YARD-WORK WATERS

Robomow RS630

Not unlike a robot vacuum, the 44-lb Robomow is set loose on your lawn—while you stay inside drinking a beer. With a battery that lasts up to an hour per charge, the mower weaves a random pattern but eventually cuts every inch of a 1/4-acre lawn. Small but mighty, it's even quiet enough to run at night without waking the neighbors. robomow.com \$2,099

BEST FOR A HILLY YARD

Craftsman 22" All Wheel Drive Lawn Mower

This gutsy 22-inch-wide machine puffs its weight with all-wheel-drive power. That makes ushering the 92-lb mower around the yard a lot easier. Because hills are more prone to scalping, the 9 cutting heights let us dial in the right setting with an almost OCD level of control. craftsman.com \$400



The engine's weight sits over the rear-drive wheels to deliver better traction on hilly lawns.



BEST FOR FLAT LAWNS UP TO 1/4 ACRE

Toro 30" TimeMaster

A 30-inch deck might not sound like much of an upgrade from a standard 21-inch, but it'll let you finish the Sunday-morning cutting session in almost half the time. Suitable for large lawns, the Toro is still nimble enough to squeeze through a garden gate. Two blades spin opposite each other, producing a fine cut. toro.com \$1,050



BEST FOR A HUGE YARD WITH TREES

Husqvarna R120S

The R120S mows straight lines at nearly 7 mph, and you'll like the responsiveness in corners. A hinged, articulating frame delivers a tight 31.5-degree turning radius to quickly zip around trees and bushes. The quirky design places the 500cc engine behind you, leaving space up front for the mowing deck and a clear view of the cutting path. husqvarna.com \$1,900

Get a Big League Lawn

New York Mets head groundskeeper Bill Deacon shares tips to achieve a durable, good-looking yard.

1. Mower Care

Sharpen your mower's blade two or three times a year and any time after hitting a rock or something that could nick the blade. If the grass tips are torn or ripped, instead of cleanly sheared, it's time to sharpen.

2. When to Water

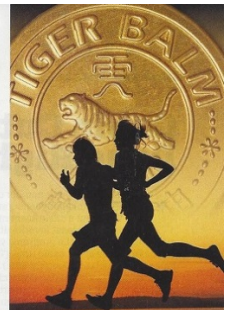
Most people overwater. Oxygen is key to growing grass, and too much water pushes oxygen out of the soil. Let dry grass just start to wilt—you can tell when walking on it leaves footprints—then irrigate.

3. Feeding Time

If you can feed only once a year, go with a late summer or early fall dose. You'll want to use a fertilizer in which at least 50 percent of the nitrogen is a slow-release type, which feeds for 8 to 10 weeks. Also key to a healthy lawn is aeration: making small holes in the soil to allow air, water, and nutrients to penetrate the ground.

4. Lawn Type

For a lawn that stands up to summer cookouts and baseball games, it's important to choose the right grass. Tall fescue is a good option for the cooler seasons in the North, and Bermuda works for the warmer climes of the southern states.



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