



The Robomow Diaries: Robot lawnmower becomes conversation starter when it runs

The Robomow has become a conversation starter for this CNET editor, but only on the days when the grass is dry enough for robot lawnmower work effectively.

It's been slow-mowing for the past few days in my front yard. But two weeks of testing a robot lawnmower have given me a reason to meet and talk to my neighbors and has given me at least one enemy in the form of a large brown and white dog.

After last week's soggy debacle of a test run, I'm waiting until my lawn is properly dry before unleashing the Robomow RS612, the \$1,599 robot lawnmower I'll be testing for the next few weeks. That pricing roughly converts to £1,210 in the UK and AU\$2,110 in Australia. That means Robomow runs are few and far between, thanks to the rainy July we've had in Louisville, Kentucky (the lawnmower *can* run in wet conditions, as we saw last week, but the company doesn't recommend it).

There was one bright spot in an exceptionally wet week. Last Friday, it was hot and dry, so I sent the Robomow out on manual mode to see how it mowed dry grass. The lawnmower spent about 30 minutes cutting. Last week, the Robomow spent closer to 40 minutes mowing, but it had to stop twice due to overheating (an action I blame on the aforementioned wet conditions). But it was smooth mowing when the grass was dry. The Robomow continuously mowed and dispersed clippings as it traveled across the lawn.

The Robomow's takeover of my front lawn has had one unexpected outcome: The robot lawnmower brings all the boys, girls, men, women and pets to the yard. I've seen drivers slow down and gape when the Robomow is out. A neighbor and his two kids stopped their bike ride to get a closer look at what they called "the turtle" and talked to me about how it worked. The professional gardener who lives next door told my husband that the Robomow strikes him as a "robotic goat" with its seemingly random method of keeping grass trimmed. And at least one dog whines, barks and jumps on its owner when it passes by on its nightly walks and the Robomow is doing its thing. I'm new to the neighborhood, so the Robomow has been the conversation-starter I didn't know I wanted.

Since its last run, I've set the Robomow to automatically cut the grass to test how well it works without intervention from me. The Robomow is designed to be a set-it-and-forget-it device; you can schedule

inactive days and times, and it will decide how often it needs to mow depending on the size of your yard, said Giselle Sendra, Robomow's digital marketing director. If the built-in rain sensor detects rain or high humidity, the Robomow will stay put. It's been raining off and on this week, so the Robomow has kept itself parked at its charging base station, and I've been peeking out the window every half hour or so to see if it has deemed my yard worthy and dry. Patience is not one of my virtues.

I'm keeping my fingers crossed for drier weather so I can stop talking about the weather and really see what the Robomow is capable of when I leave it to its own devices.



One neighbor said the Robomow RS612 looks like a turtle zipping across the yard. I can see it. Chris Monroe/CNET