

## Mow Down Pollution with a Lawnmower Rebate

Most of us don't think of garden equipment as causing air pollution but the small engines found in most lawnmowers, leaf blowers and weed trimmers have no emission controls and produce a surprising amount of smog. Two-stroke engines burn a lot of oil and are substantially dirtier than the four-stroke engines in our automobiles. Garden equipment emits high levels of carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides, producing a surprising 3-5% of Canada's air pollution. To a lesser extent, garden machinery also produces greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) that lead to climate change.

A typical, older 3.5 horsepower lawnmower engine can emit the same amount of VOCs in an hour as a new car driven 500 km! Gasoline spills are also a major problem. It was recently estimated in the U.S. that over 17 million gallons of fuel are spilled each year while outdoor power equipment is being filled.

Luckily, there are some good alternatives. A number of manufacturers are producing electric or cordless rechargeable mowers. They are quiet, easy to start, require no gas or oil, and are very cheap to run. Although electricity generation also causes smog, far less smog is produced than would result from using a gas-powered mower for the same lawn.

If your lawn is not too large, you can enjoy some healthy exercise while using a push-powered mower. They work forever, are very quiet, and burn only calories. The modern push mowers available today are lightweight at only 5-15 kg, versus the 20-30 kg models of the past.

There are even some better gas-powered lawnmower options these days. Those of you with larger lawns in rural Caledon might consider newer gas mowers that generate up to 70% lower emissions than models produced 10 years ago. Engine emission regulations for new gas mowers came into force on January 1, 2005. It is expected that these regulations will achieve a 44% reduction in GHGs from off-road, small spark-ignition engines by 2005. Also, using a new gas mower with a spill-proof can prevent gasoline spills, which further lessens the environmental impact.

Even if your decades-old lawnmower is still running, it can be a real environmental problem. This is a great time to upgrade, as there is an excellent rebate program available this month. Mow Down Pollution is an initiative of the Clean Air Foundation, a Canadian non-profit organization dedicated to improving air quality. This program is designed to encourage and reward people to take their older, high-polluting mowers permanently out of the yard. Last year they recycled over 4700 lawnmowers.

You can bring in any old gasoline mower or trimmer (even if it doesn't work) to any Home Depot location between April 20-30, 2006, and you will receive a rebate of \$25-100 toward the purchase of a newer, less-polluting lawnmower or electric trimmer. The Clean Air Foundation will ensure that your old equipment is recycled responsibly. Any oil and gas will be removed and recycled, parts will be re-used where possible, and the remaining steel will be recycled. Even if you do not purchase a new product, you can still bring in your old mower or trimmer for free recycling.

In addition to the responsible recycling of old higher-polluting mowers and trimmers through the *Mow Down Pollution* program, take advantage of great rebates and incentives on a variety of lawn and garden products that encourage energy efficiency and conservation. Eco-Options products such as natural fertilizers, soil alternatives and plant food, herbicides, solar lighting, outdoor energy-efficient lighting, automatic yard watering kits, and other water conservation items will be featured.

For information on this great program, visit [www.mowdownpollution.ca](http://www.mowdownpollution.ca) or e-mail [eserafini@cleanairfoundation.org](mailto:eserafini@cleanairfoundation.org), or phone 416-922-038 ext 42.

For more information about other topics in the Caledon Clean Air Clean Energy Program, please contact us at [cca@caledoncountryside.org](mailto:cca@caledoncountryside.org) or (905) 584-6221.

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