

You Shouldn't Have to Dread Lawn Care

You've probably heard the saying: No pain, no gain. You might expect that to be true in the gym, but in the backyard? Yet a new national consumer study reveals that mowing the lawn can result in a variety of physical ailments.

About a third of those polled in the survey, sponsored by mower manufacturer Lawn-Boy, reported they have a sore back after they mow, while others reported problems with shoulders, arms, hands, legs or feet.

According to Joe Hager, senior engineer for Lawn-Boy, the mower you use can make a big difference in how your body feels after mowing. "The right kind of mower helps people benefit from the aerobic exercise of yard work without unnecessary strains," he says. "Equipment should adjust to the individual to avoid sore muscles or joints."

Hager's company uses "experiential" research to study homeowners actually using lawn mowers in their yards. Engineers document how people exert energy and strain their bodies while mowing, and develop new features to avoid muscle or joint injury. The research has resulted in improvements to make mowing easier, such as adjustable handles, ergonomic grips, reduced mower weight and easy-turn wheels. "People can avoid pain if they use a mower that doesn't require excessive force to operate and adjusts to their individual needs," Hager adds.

With all the options available, how do you know which mower is right for you? New this spring, Lawn-Boy has unveiled an online shopping guide you can use to find the answer.

Just log on to www.findyourmower.com, and enter information such as who will be doing most of the lawn care, the size of your yard, and what kind of terrain you'll be mowing. The guide then takes that information and lets you know about features that match your particular needs, from a self-propel system that automatically adjusts to your walking speed to a bag you can empty with just one hand.

With the right equipment, the backyard can be a satisfying place for exercise and enjoyment. Mowing is "light" exercise, a recommended type of aerobic activity that doesn't cause strain when done properly with a mower that fits your body. And moderate exercise, including mowing, helps you stimulate your heart rate, an important factor in maintaining a healthier heart. You can burn about 100 calories for every 13 minutes you're walking behind your mower, according to "The Wellness Encyclopedia."

"People should view mowing and gardening as components of an exercise program," says Jeff Restuccio, an advocate of "aerobic gardening" and fitness author. "If you look at yard work from a totally different perspective, it's a great opportunity to get fit." If you don't have a huge yard, Restuccio suggests using a walk-behind mower instead of a rider to maximize exercise.

Yard work can become healthy yard exercise if you generate aerobic activity that avoids

pains and strains by using equipment that works with your body – not against it. More information is available at www.findyourmower.com.