

Root Out Lawn and Garden Tool Hazards

For many Americans, working outdoors on the lawn and in the garden is a great way to exercise and relax. However, safety experts warn that, if caution is not employed with lawn and garden tools, you could wind up spending more time indoors, starting with a trip to a hospital emergency room.

"The most frequent injuries are from lawn mowers, which are unforgiving machines," cautions John Drengenberg, manager of Consumer Affairs for Underwriters Laboratories Inc., Northbrook, Ill., a not-for-profit product safety testing organization. "Statistics tell us that each year lawn mower accidents send close to 85,000 people to emergency rooms. But that's not all. Nearly 15,000 others need medical treatment for injuries from trimmers and other power garden tools."

Drengenberg suggests taking these precautions when working with **lawn mowers**:

- * Read the owner's manual and know how to stop the machine instantly in an emergency.
- * Always start the mower outdoors. Never operate it where carbon monoxide can collect, such as in a closed garage or storage shed.
- * Do not run an electrically powered lawn mower on wet grass.
- * Use an extension cord designed for outdoor use and rated for the power needs of the machine.
- * Never reach under the mower while it is running. Make all adjustments with the motor off.
- * Ensure all safety guards are in place. If you hit a foreign object or have a malfunction, turn off the mower (and disconnect the power cord from electric models) before inspecting for damage.
- * Never leave a lawn mower running while unattended.
- * Keep other adults, children, and pets clear. Mowers can fling rocks at up to 200 miles per hour.
- * Make sure shoes provide good traction and have sturdy soles to resist punctures and protect toes. Never work barefoot or in sandals, canvas shoes, etc.

Concerning lawn and garden tools, it is best to:

- * Inspect tools for frayed power cords and cracked or broken casings. If the product is damaged, have it repaired by a qualified technician, or replace it.

- * Always wear safety glasses and proper attire. Keep clothing, hands, and feet away from cutting blades at all times. Never wear loose jewelry when working with tools.
- * Never alter a product or remove any safety features, especially blade guards and electric plug grounding pins.
- * Check the switch on a power tool or garden appliance to make sure it is off before you plug it in.
- * Unplug all portable electrically operated power tools when not in use. They contain electricity even when turned off but still plugged in.
- * Pay attention to warning markings. Do not allow tools to get wet unless they are specifically labeled "Immersible." When operating tools outside, make sure they are appropriate for that use.
- * Use and store power tools and garden appliances away from water sources to avoid electric shock. Never use power tools and appliances in the rain.
- * Do not carry an appliance by the cord or yank the cord when removing it from a receptacle. When disconnecting, always grasp the plug--not the wire. Keep the cord away from heat, oil, and objects with sharp edges.

Source: CBS Interactive Inc.