

Extension Notes

Personal Column for November 2, 2010

By Gary Hall, ISU Regional Extension Education Director

Putting Them to Bed – Children and Lawnmowers

Remember putting your children to bed? You probably gave them a bath to wash all the outside dirt off of their bodies. Then you dressed them in their pajamas, held them as you rocked back and forth while reading “Good Night Moon.” Perhaps you even gave them some warm milk before tucking them into their bed. After kneeling at their bedside to hear their prayers you gently kissed them and made your way toward the door and turned off the light with the hope they would close their eyes and fall off to sleep.

Believe it or not, putting your lawnmower to bed is a lot like putting your child to bed only easier. Devote some quality time to your mower before putting it to bed for the winter.

You always tell your children to use the bathroom before going to bed for obvious reasons. Same with a lawnmower...you need to drain the gas tank. You can also use a gasoline stabilizer. Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy.

Brushing teeth before bed could be equated to adding a few drops of oil squirted inside the spark plug hole (after you remove the spark plug). The oil will help lubricate the cylinder. While you have the spark plug removed, replace it with a new one.

The lawn mower needs to be cleaned thoroughly before putting it to bed for the winter. Scrape off any dirt and grass clippings from the underside of the mower. Rinse off the lawn mower and wipe it dry. No need to tickle the lawnmower in the process though.

If your mowing equipment has a battery, clean the battery terminals, which usually corrode during the season. A wire-bristle brush is a good tool for doing this. The battery can then be removed or connected to a battery monitor that will keep it charged over winter. If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter (a cool basement works best).

Now is also an excellent time to sharpen mower blades so they'll be ready for next spring. You can sharpen it yourself or have the blade professionally sharpened.

Your child enjoys a warm cozy bed in which to slumber. The mower prefers a cool, dry place. If you are planning to cover your mower, be sure to use a cloth material because plastic will trap moisture.

The mower will never say prayers or kiss you goodnight but it will perform well next year when you wake it for use next spring.

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