



March Maintenance

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Small Engine Upkeep

Before you fire up your small engine-powered tools for the first time this season, take a minute to do a little pre-season maintenance. Make things easy on yourself and your engine. Remember that it needs air, fuel and a spark.

If you have your owner's manual, check for preventative or seasonal maintenance tips. If the manual can't be found, do a quick Internet search for engine brand and model. When I pulled up my Tecumseh motor for my loader-mounted post auger, I found a manual and a troubleshooting guide, both downloadable.

With them in hand, walk through the following: Check and clean the air filter; if it can't be cleaned, replace it. Clear any dust or debris from the air intake.

Check fuel tank, lines and filter. Before you fill the tank, check it for sediment left over from last season. Shine a flashlight at the lowest point in the tank. If you see sediment there, shut off the fuel line and wipe it out if possible. If not, disconnect the fuel line (and possibly the tank) and flush the sediment out with a small amount of gas. If there is a sediment bowl or fuel filter, remove, clean and/or replace.

Check your ignition system. Pull the plug, clean it and reset the gap according to the owner's manual. If there is a battery, use a voltage tester to ensure it is charged and carries the needed voltage. Clean the terminals and check all electrical cables for breaks in insulation or corrosion.

Lubricate. Change oil and other fluids as needed. Check greaseable bearings, chains and control cables for needed lubrication.

When all this is done, give the cord a pull or hit the start button, lean back and listen to the purr.

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