

Ag Column Article
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Preventative Maintenance Preserves Small Engine Life

With the gardening and lawn mowing season almost over, we will be soon be storing our small engine tools such string trimmers, blowers, chain saws, lawn mowers, water pumps, etc. Taking a few minutes to do some preventative maintenance will save a lot of frustration next season and prolong the life of your equipment. If you are going to leave fuel in the tank, you should fill the tank, add a fuel stabilizer and run the engine for five minutes to make sure the stabilizer is distributed through the carburetor. According to a publication written by Jim Wills, retired UT AG Engineering Specialist, you should use a fuel stabilizer to preserve the quality of fuel during the winter. Filling the tank will prevent condensation and rust. Metal tanks left partially full will rust as water condenses in the tank. You can also drain the tank and run the engine until the fuel in the lines and carburetor is used.

Change the engine oil while the engine is warm to insure you get as much of the old oil out of the engine as possible. According to Wills, this is best done in the fall as old motor oil contain acids, moisture, carbon and other damaging materials which can corrode the internal parts of the engine. Change the oil filter if there is one on the engine.

Consider recycling your used motor oil to protect your ground water. Recycling centers can be found at some landfills as well as some auto parts stores.

Remove the spark plug and pour about one tablespoon of motor oil into the opening. Then turn the motor over two or three times, with the spark plug wire disconnected, to insure lubrication of the piston and cylinder.

Service the air cleaner. Some types of cleaners can be cleaned and used again, but a paper cleaner probably should be replaced.

Sharpen the blades and clean out the grass from the underside of the mower deck.

Wills noted that the engine can be cleaned by spraying with a degreaser allowing it to soak and then spraying off. Make sure to cover the carburetor and air breather to prevent water from entering the engine.

If you plan to operate small engines in temperatures below freezing, a 10w-30 weight oil should be used. This oil would allow better lubrication with the 10 weight in the colder weather.

Just a little time now will save you much time next year when you need your small engine equipment.