

CORPORATE ENGINEERING

GENERAL  ELECTRIC

1 RIVER ROAD, SCHENECTADY, N. Y. 12305



SUBJECT

COPIES: D.E. Cain
C.B. Fontaine
C.C. Leader
G. Thornton
J.F. Young
(AR1635)

Corporate Engineering Review.
New Businesses Development Operation
Appropriation Request 87-251
Lease of space and purchase of equipment for
Engineering, Manufacturing & Test Marketing of an
Electric Battery-powered garden tractor, during
the period 1969-1971
This Request \$525,000; Total Project \$772,000.

August 25, 1969

Mr. R. M. Fisher
Manager-Engineering
Advanced Products Operation
Corporations Park
SCOTIA, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Fisher:

It has always been clear that entry into the business area which the Electric Garden Tractor will penetrate would be dependent upon dealer structure, service, and adequate product quality, in almost that order: quite the reverse of the normal G.E. pattern where we take many things for granted. In spite of the adage about a "better mouse-trap" the first two steps named are all-important. It is not within my purview to evaluate the adequacy of the dealer approach, but from the standpoint of an owner and operator of a garden tractor you have made a good start, so I will restrict my comments to the aspects of service and general product design.

A garden tractor experiences rough handling and while the gasoline engine variety vibrates much more than your electric drive, it is the accessories which really take the beating, mower, sno-blower, etc. I have several times broken blades in my mower when hitting rocks - they have not been easy to fix. Your mower, on the other hand, would be much easier to repair or maintain than mine. I consider the front-mounting feature and the serviceability to be excellent, highly saleable features.

Dallas Cain and I might quibble about a few design points, but in general, the present design is equal to or superior to competitive products with the following summary reactions: (It is recognized that even the prototype which we saw is not exactly what you will be making later)

