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THE HOW-TO-DO MAGAZINE

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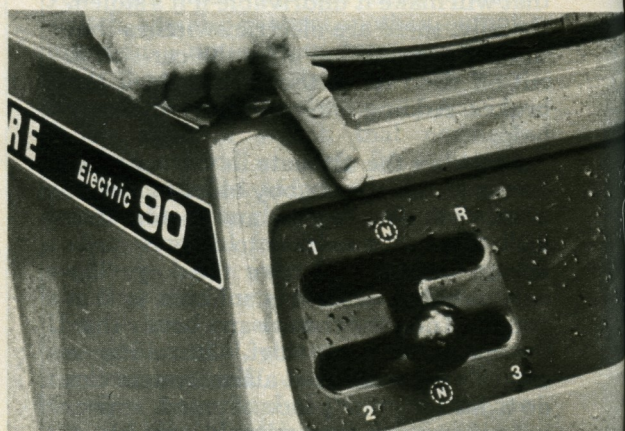
The Top Jobs for Men



We Test Two Medium-Price Electric Mowers



LEVER on Deere machine lets you control blade height. Pedal at bottom is brake.



GEAR-SHIFT control knob is handily located below right knee as you sit on machine.

BATTERY-power lawn & garden machines aren't exactly brand-new. In fact, we reported on the first electric tractor last year.

But people are showing more and more interest in these quiet, relatively carefree machines. So when two more new models were announced, at prices considerably lower than the \$1,595 machine we tested last year, we were anxious to put them through their paces.

The cheaper of two models is the John

Deere Electric Riding Mower which has a suggested list price of \$885. It has three electric motors, two that power twin 34-in. rotary cutting blades, the other the machine itself. The power source is three 12-volt batteries.

Our test area was, again, an acre and a quarter of rather sloping greensward.

The Deere machine is operated like a car. From your seat (quite comfortable, by the way), you reach down and turn the ignition key, located on a panel



MACHINE from GE is more properly called a tractor. Left, lever that controls blade height. Above, foot is on combination brake-clutch.

under your left leg. Then with your right foot on the brake, the left on the clutch, you put the machine in gear by manipulating a gear shift below your right leg on the panel; flip a toggle switch on the panel to activate the blades, let up on the clutch and brake, and you're off.

We found that the start-off was a little jerky. But once the machine is going there's no problem. It cuts well. There is a lever to lower and raise the mower deck to adjust to grass height.

Particularly good, we found, is the machine's trimming ability—giving grass a close shave near flower beds and the like. This is done from the left side of the machine, because housing extends to the right.

The John Deere Electric 90 is charged by plugging into a standard grounded household outlet, which in our case is in the garage. The recharge cord is rather short and could prove troublesome in some situations.

Specs say that one can get a battery recharge of up to 80 percent in five hours and 100 percent in 12 hours. However, we did run out of power a couple of times and were advised by a serviceman to keep the machine plugged in all the

time when not running it. We never learned whether this was just a problem with our particular machine or could be a common shortcoming.

To make sure that we are in tune with the Women's Liberation movement we have, during our various mower tests over the past year, had a distaff member of our household try them out. Of all the machines, she liked the Electric 90 the best.

The big plus of any electric mower, of course, is that it's quiet. In operation (as opposed to idling) the Electric 90 was the quietest of all.

All in all, assuming you don't have to keep the machine plugged in all the time, we'd pick the Electric 90 over any gas mower we've tried.

The E10 by General Electric differs from the Electric 90 in several respects. For one thing, it is technically classed as a tractor, to which you attach the mower deck (36-in. rotary blades are used) or other accessories. While the Electric 90 also can accommodate accessories, such as a snowblower, its mower deck is built into the machine.

Cost of the E10 with a standard 36-volt battery pack is \$1,090 FOB factory

We Test Two Medium-Price Electric Mowers

plus \$195 for the mower deck.

The E10's charging is similar to the Electric 90. You plug it into a grounded outlet. In 2½ hours the batteries are charged to 50 percent of full power, 85 percent in five hours and 100 percent in 12 to 16 hours.

To operate it, you turn the ignition key, flip a switch, depress the clutch, put it in gear, flip a toggle switch to get the blades moving, release the clutch and off you go. To stop the machine you depress the clutch partially. The E10 will also stop if you get off the seat. This is a desirable safety feature because while mowing one's tendency, if you have to get off the machine for some reason, is to keep the machine running. And this procedure has caused accidents.

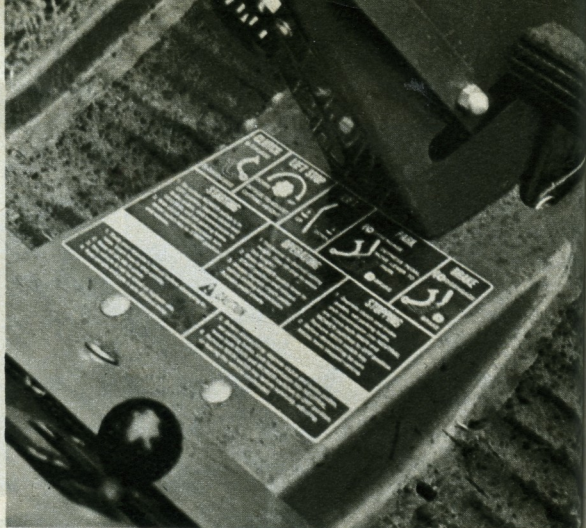
We found that the twin blades did a fine cutting job but it got only passing marks on trimming corners because of the intrusion of the left front wheel.

We particularly liked its stability on the sloping portions of the lawn and its cornering ability, which is excellent. If you have tall grass that needs to be trimmed, you'll likely find the E10 useful. Just raise the mower deck to the proper height by pulling on a handy lever and trim away. We found that it did a good job.

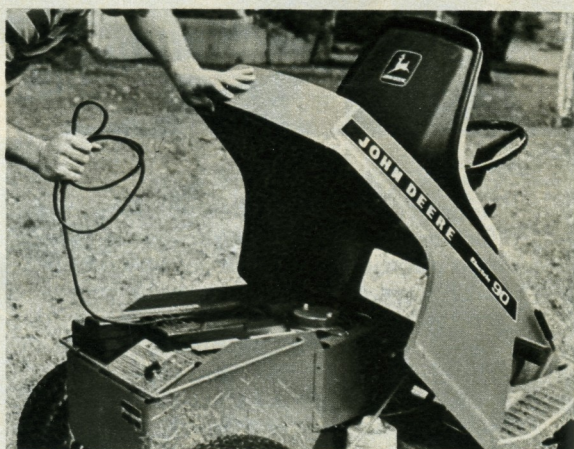
We also had an opportunity to test the E10 on mulching leaves in the fall and it did a good job on this as well as blowing the shredded leaves off the lawn.

Another plus of the E10 is a power take-off arrangement. There is a receptacle on the machine for plugging in a variety of electric power tool accessories, such as a hedge clipper and chain saw. In effect, this makes the E10 a portable power plant; you bring your power source to the exact spot where it's needed.

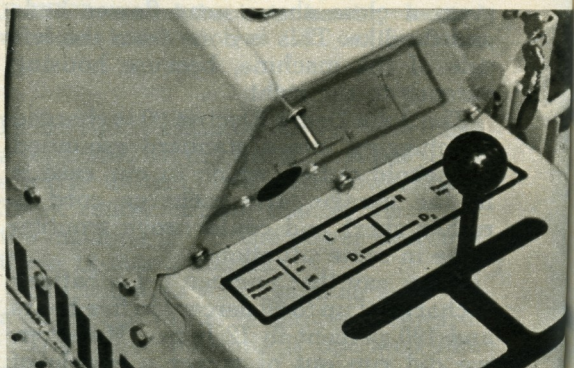
Capacity of the E10 is said to be up to 2½ acres on a single charge. For those with large lawns, it would seem to be an excellent machine. ●



SO YOU'LL NEVER wonder how to operate Deere machine, instructions are printed on it.



TO GET at battery pack, you lift up seat as shown. Mower uses 36-volt power supply.



GEAR control on GE tractor is in well in front of driver. Switch shown controls blades.