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They're Hushing Up the Mowers

By Frank K. Coffee

YOU might call this year's bumper crop of lawn care equipment a quiet sensation. There are ear-saving—and air saving—electric riders, a new quiet-running high torque engine for Toro walkers, and the first Wankel-powered rotary mower along with a couple of big new names on the yard-and-garden scene. The emphasis is definitely on quiet.

Good news for prospective mower buyers with half an acre or more of greenery is that GE has scored a price breakthrough in electric riding mowers. The new ER8-36 at \$700 (including a 36-in. mower that lists for \$200 alone) sells for less than many comparable gas-powered grass-croppers.

But keep this in mind: if you have no more than half an acre of lawn, and health or age isn't a factor, walking rotaries are still your best bet economically. (They outsell riders by nearly six to one.) So let's look first at the new walkers and then go on to the riders and small cats and some useful new accessories.

Arctic Enterprises' Grass Cat Wankel

claims a total-torque cutting action that is smoother and more efficient at lower rpm than any piston-powered mower. The 21-in., 4-hp push rotary has low maintenance needs and is virtually vibration-free. Price is \$160. Arctic, which formerly made private-label mowers, is also behind a new line of Grass Cat/Tractor mowers.

At the heart of every 1974 Toro Guardian and Grassmaster rotary is a new high-torque engine developed specifically for cutting grass. It increases cutting force while sharply reducing noise. If your neighbor is in his house just 30 ft. away, Toro claims he probably won't hear your mower.

The new Grassmaster is three mowers in one. It operates as a rear-bagger, a mulching mower, and a dispersing mower with a side chute that can easily be attached. There are three Grassmaster models—priced from \$165 for hand-propelled finger-tip start, to \$240 for Key-Lectric start, self-propelled. All have 21-in. cutting blades and a new rear safety shield.



MTD's **ELECTRO-MATIC** is powered by 3 separate motors: one operates automatic drive transmission, the other two are for each blade in the full-floating 38-in. cutting deck. \$939.95.



AMF's golf-cart type rider with rear-mounted Briggs & Stratton 8-hp engine and full-floating 36-in. twin-blade mower sells for \$680.



WHITE's Yard Boss 1-hp lawn tractor (front) with 38-in. cutting width is shown with the Field Boss, White's newest farm tractor.

MTD Products' new rotary mower series boasts true rear-discharge design. The polyester catcher of the new Lawnflites is mounted in the rear, under the handles—no bulky bag protrudes on the side. Deck profile is low for easier cutting under shrubs. Cutting widths are 20 and 22 in., with $3\frac{1}{2}$ and 4-hp respectively. The 20-in. model sells for \$130.

Newest items in the John Deere lawn-and-garden line are 18- and 20-in. recoil-start mowers priced at \$95 and \$110 respectively. There's also an 18-in. trimming mower (\$80).



FORD, a new name in rotary mowers has come out with four push-type rotaries. Shown is the LM 19 with 19-in. cutting width.



GILSON's 16-hp mower with 42-in. cutting width allows close trimming on both sides of deck because discharge is to the rear.

Simplicity has introduced a new line of budget-priced 20- and 22-in. walk-behinds. Both models in its new Zipper series feature easy-spin recoil starting, 7-in. wheels, 7-position height adjustment, stamped steel decks and $3\frac{1}{2}$ -hp Briggs & Stratton 4-cycle engines that do away with mixing gas and oil.

There are also two big new names to look for in rotary mowers in '74: Ford and White Motor Corp. This is the first year Ford has included walk-behind mowers—including four rotaries—in its outdoor products line. The Ford rotaries include 19- and 21-in. push types and a

Mowers



GE has scored a price breakthrough in electric riders with the ER8-36. With 36-in.-cut, five-speed lawn mower sells for \$695.

21-in. self-propelled mower with recoil or electric starting.

White's recently formed Outdoor Products Division has a 21-product line including push and self-propelled mowers in 18- to 22-in. widths and front-and-rear-mount riding mowers in 26- to 34-in. widths—with 5- and 8-hp engines in both designs. There's also a 10-hp White lawn tractor with 38-in. cut and a heavy-duty garden tractor series.

Lawn-Boy, which test marketed a battery-powered rotary last year, is going national with it this year. The 19-in. cordless electric carries a 36V rechargeable power pack on the mower deck and cuts up to 7,500 sq. ft. of lawn per charge under normal cutting conditions. Recharge time is about 12 hr. and an extra power pack is optional for larger lawns. The push model weighs 65 lbs. and will sell for around \$210.



WHEEL HORSE A-800 Ranger 8-hp tractor mower with rear-discharge mower costs \$800 with recoil start, \$920 with electric.



ARCTIC's 4-hp 21-in. Grass Cat Wankel rotary (front, \$160) is shown with Grass Cat Tractor with 8-hp Briggs & Stratton (\$650).

MTD's Quiet One rear-engine rider has fully-vented engine hood which is baffled to direct noise, heat and fumes down and out. \$580.





TORO's 21-in. Grassmaster push rotary with new high-torque engine for increased cutting force and less noise sells for \$240.

Make the right selection in a walker and the only easier way to mow a lawn is riding.

Between dry gas tanks and concern with air and noise pollution, 1974 could be the year of the electric rider. The typical electric produces about one-third the noise level of an equivalent 8-hp gas-powered rider. Most are good for about an hour—or one acre—before needing to be rejuiced.

Power source is three heavy-duty 12V batteries, which are guaranteed for two years and should last five. Power comes through three electric motors. One keeps you moving; the other two drive the cutting blades. They're all practically maintenance-free. Except for charging the batteries—a built-in charger plugs into any grounded household outlet and restores up to 80 percent of full capacity in five hours, a full charge in 12—they need about as much attention as an electric refrigerator.

Joining GE, John Deere and Jacobsen with battery-powered electrics are Wheel Horse, Roper, MTD, International Harvester and J.C. Penney.

There also are some strong new contenders in the gas-powered rider class.

AMF's golf-cart-styled rider has an 8-hp Briggs & Stratton synchro-balanced engine that reduces vibration up

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WHEEL HORSE E-60 six-speed electric rider with 32-in. mower produces about $\frac{1}{3}$ the noise of an equivalent gas-powered tractor.



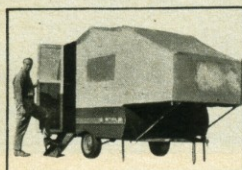
MASSEY-FERGUSON's MF8 8-hp riding mower with 32-in. cut has 3-quart fuel tank to stretch mowing time between refueling.

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Hushing the Mowers

[Continued from page 63]

to 80 percent over conventional engines. With electric start, full-floating, 36-in., twin-blade mower and a 60-watt headlight, it sells for \$680.

Simplicity has a tough new rider in its 8-hp steel-frame Grabber. It has a 30-in. cutting width and central pivot that isolates front-wheel shocks from the rear. Brake and clutch are on one pedal, making inching or stopping easy. Price is \$600.

Turning to the more compact cats, or lawn tractors, we'd first better point out how they differ from riding mowers. With riding mowers, the seat is positioned ahead of the engine and the mower deck is part of the machine. With lawn tractors, the operator sits behind the engine and the mower deck may or may not be permanently attached, and is often priced separately. Both riders and small cats can be used to push a dozer blade or to pull a limited number of lawn-and-garden accessories, including rollers, aerators, dump carts and sweepers.

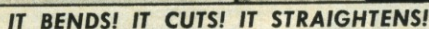
Wheel Horse's new A-800 Ranger lawn tractor comes with a full-floating twin-bladed, 32-in. side-discharge mower. With recoil or electric starting it goes for around \$800-plus.

Roper has two new tractor mowers: the 7-hp Mini-Brute with attached 26-in. mower, and the Briggs & Stratton synchro-balanced 8-hp Rally model,



RIDING mower from Snapper is available in six models with either recoil or electric start, 5- and 8-hp engines. Cutting widths of 26 in. and 30 in. with cutting heights from 1 in. to 4 in. Vacuum-action pickup. Grass catcher is optional equipment.

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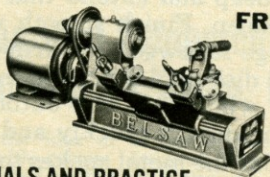
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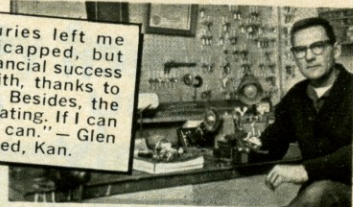
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Golden Hammer

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Look for the names of more winners next month.

Toro also have introduced new 8-hp tractor mowers geared to small to medium-size lawns. For bigger needs, GE has seven Elec-Traks ranging all the way up to the 18-hp E20 and including two new workhorses that mount 42-in. front mowers. Also new: Simplicity's 13-hp Baron; Sears' 16-hp twin-cylinder tractor; Bolens' QS-16, a 1-cyl. version of its quiet-twin (QT) 16.

Economy's 14-hp Jim Dandy has been completely reworked with new frames and brakes and a lift system for increased ground clearance. With 48-in. mower it sells for \$1,653.

There are several other new lawn-care items to look for including International Harvester's 1¾-hp no-stoop edger-trimmer (\$35); Black & Decker's Multi-Vator powered hand tool (\$30) which comes with accessory heads for cultivating and pulverizing soil, and Disston's cordless-electric grass shear (\$33) which converts from a hand tool to an upright shear. And ready to move off the drawing boards at Roper is a hedge-trimming attachment to make your chain saw a hedge trimmer. ●