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It's Already Time To Mow the Lawn Again?

With the recent rains and hot weather, it is lawn mowing time. To decrease thatch buildup in your lawn mow frequently and remove no more than one third of the grass height at any one time. Therefore, unless you have an automatic mower you will be on or behind a powerful machine many times this summer. Last year over 60,000 people in the U.S. were injured from using lawn mowers. With proper maintenance and safe operation, these injuries can be eliminated.

First of all, check out the mower. Read and follow the owner's manual. Inspect the mower and check safety devices such as the operator presence switch and discharge chute before mowing. The operator presence switch, or dead-mans switch, is the switch that must be held in place to keep the mower running. This switch can be located under the seat or as a handle bar. The operator must be on the seat or holding the handle bar in a fixed position to keep the mower running. This prevents the operator from being able to come in contact with the blade while the mower is running. The discharge chute keeps objects that are expelled from the mower at low trajectories.

Next, inspect the yard. Remove foreign objects which may be run over by mower such as balls, toys, sticks, rocks, etc. Objects can be expelled at 200 m.p.h. from a mower. Not only dangerous but window replacement can be expensive. Make sure the grass is dry. Wet grass will clog the mower and is difficult to cut.

Next, like my dad used to tell me "Operate this machine like you have some sense." No extra riders. Never unclog a mower while it is running, always shut it off. Keep bystanders away. Never leave an unattended mower running. For steep slopes, riding mowers should be driven downhill and push mowers should be pushed across the hill. This will keep the mower from ending up on top of you.

Finally, safely maintain your mower. Never add gas to a running or hot engine. A gallon of gas has the blasting power of many sticks of dynamite. Always disconnect the sparkplug when working on a mower. When a person is working on a mower and turns the blades, an engine can possibly crank. If this occurs, you are near the blades, you could be severely injured.

To learn the specifics on gardening we have both free and for-sale publications at our office in the back of the Public Services Building on the corner of Third Loop and Irby St. You may also visit our Home & Garden Information Center through our web site at www.clemson.edu/florence. I may be contacted through our web site, amelton@clemson.edu or 661-4800.

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