Landscape Gardening Aerobics

Photo, special to the Democrat: Mow your lawn and get an aerobic workout at the same time with a hand-powered reel mower. But, unlike this gardener, do wear shoes.

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Do yourself a favor and turn your landscape chores into healthful aerobic exercise. Save that drive to the gym, not to mention membership fees. Most power equipment for the yard such as rotary mowers, hedge trimmers, edgers, chain saws, string trimmers, leaf blowers, chippers, tillers, and lawn tractors, can all be replaced with simple hand tools. The most efficient machine is the human body. With the appropriate hand tool a human can produce more work with less fuel than any energy consuming machine.

Gas or electric alternatives to landscape maintenance tools are hand shears for hedges; hand edgers for beds, sidewalks and driveways; hand saws, lawn brooms, spading forks, and rakes, to name a few.

Consider pushing a reel mower to limit your environmental impact. Reel mowers cost less to purchase and maintain than gas rotary mowers. Small lawns are ideal for reel mowers. You cut greenhouse gas emissions, get a good aerobic workout, and give your neighbors a little more peace and quiet. The original push-type lawn mower in 19th Century England was advertised as
"an amusing, useful and healthy exerciser for the country gentleman." Lawn mowing and other gardening tasks are indeed good aerobic exercises.

Reel push type mowers do have limitations. They are not suitable for types of grass that must be cut higher than two to two and a half inches such as most St. Augustine grasses and Bahia grass. On the other hand: Zoysia, centipede, dwarf varieties of St. Augustine grass and Bermuda grass do well with a reel type mower. Precision Sharpening and Key Shop, on Capital Circle SE, can keep your reel mower sharpened.

These hand powered devices were all that was available sixty to seventy years ago. It was a way of life and we may have been better off for it.

Remember to drink lots of water during hot weather. And your “aches and pains medicine” will be more effective if it is taken before strenuous exercise rather than after.

And just a few words about the material that’s left after trimming and mowing. It’s best to just leave the clippings on the lawn. If you do use a grass catcher, put the grass clippings in the compost. Tree leaves can also be saved for mulch or composting. Some people call clippings and leaves “yard waste” while most true gardeners consider them “yard bounty.” If your property restrictions permit, make a “brush pile habitat” for wildlife with pruned branches and trimmings. These practices will help build humus in your soil. What grows in your yard should stay in your yard and not be sent to the land fill. It’s too valuable to throw away.

Note: An electric mower is another fuel efficient choice. Electric mowers have one percent of the carbon footprint that gas powered mowers typically have.

If you can’t find a reel mower locally, here are a couple of links that may be helpful.

http://Peoplepowermachines.com
http://www.bizrate.com/gardentools/products__keyword--push+reel+lawn+mowers.html

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