



the Wheat Belt Connection

HAPPY SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

MARCH 2020

Three Ways to Electrify Your Lawn Care

By Abby Berry from NRECA's Straight Talk

Spring is just around the corner, and you can practically smell the freshly-cut grass. If you're in the market to upgrade your lawn care equipment, you may want to consider electric (or battery-powered) options.

Gas-powered lawn mowers and trimmers may be your go-to, but times they are a changin'. Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products compared to their gas-powered counterparts. Here are three ways you can electrify your lawn care this spring.

Electric Lawn Mowers

Electric lawn mowers have come a long way over the last few years. Early models required corded connections, which were tricky to manage—but the cord has been cut. Newer cordless electric mowers are certainly more expensive than gas-powered mowers, but much of the upfront cost can be recovered since electricity is a less expensive fuel than gas, and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines. Cordless electric mowers typically range from \$200 to \$500.

Electric mowers are suitable for most lawn care needs, with batteries that typically require about one to two hours to fully charge, and most batteries can run for a full hour. That said, if you have a large yard (half an acre or larger), a gas-powered option may be best to suit your needs.

Electric Trimmers

Cordless electric string trimmers are a great option for most lawns. Traditionally, like lawn mowers, string trimmers have typically been powered by gas. But new versions of electric trimmers are improving and are now considered worthy competitors of gas-powered models.

Cordless electric trimmers are much quieter and easier to use, but most batteries last about 30 to 45 minutes. So, if you have a lot of space to trim, you may want to consider a back-up battery or plan to work in short bursts. If you're interested in purchasing an electric trimmer, the main factors to consider are the battery's life, charge time and power. Costs can vary depending on your needs, but you can find a quality version for about \$100.

Electric Leaf Blowers

After cutting and trimming your lawn, you'll need to clear off those walkways and patios for the finishing touch. If you don't want to deal with the maintenance of a gas-powered blower or the restraints of a corded blower, a cordless electric version is a great option.

Cordless electric leaf blowers are lightweight and easy to maneuver, but they don't offer quite as much power as gas-powered and corded blowers. If your leaf blowing and clearing needs are minimal, a cordless electric leaf blower can get the job done. Costs for a cordless electric blower vary depending on power and battery quality, but you can purchase a dependable model for about \$150 and up.

If you're looking to electrify your lawn care equipment, be sure to do your homework. Search online for the latest reviews, and check trusted websites like Consumer-Reports.org. With a little research, you'll be well on your way to Lawn of the Month – with less maintenance, hassle and noise (and your neighbors will thank you!).

Wheat Belt Connection

Editors-Pam Wieser & Yolanda Hruska

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Drawing Winner

Yolanda Hruska

Congratulations to Jay and Melanie Sporer, our January "Lucky Winners"! The Sporer, residents of Keith County, have four children and one grandchild, Charlie; three children are older, and their youngest, Jarrett, is a junior in high school. Jay is a highway contractor and Melanie is a farm wife. They enjoy fishing, reading, spending time with family and attending Jarrett's sporting events.

Jay and Melanie have received a \$50 credit for their prompt payment. If you would like to be included in our next drawing, and avoid the \$5 delinquent fee, please send your payment before the 15th of the month. For your convenience, we offer several options. Please give us a call or visit wheatbelt.com, and select the Customer Services menu.

You're Invited...

**APRIL
24
2-4pm** | **CUSTOMER
MEETING
2020**

Save the Date!

Details in the April WB Connection

Quotes to Ponder

"Danger is real, but fear is a choice!"

Unknown

"Happiness is something that comes into our lives through doors we don't even remember leaving open."

Rose Lane

"The more I live, the more I think that humor is the saving sense."

Jacob August Rits

"May the best day of your past, be the worst day of your future."

Irish Sayings

"May you never forget what is worth remembering nor ever remember what is best forgotten."

Irish Sayings

"A good friend is like a four leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have!"

Irish Sayings

"Do not resent growing old, many are not given the privilege."

Irish Proverb

"A good laugh and a long sleep are the two best cures for anything." Irish Proverb



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Tim Lindahl
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Tim's Tidbits

Protecting our Rates



The rural electric industry works together to gain the economies of scale for efficiencies needed to be competitive. Since our formation, these partnerships have been critical and have evolved to be a robust network of utilities, working together with common purpose, to serve the folks in rural America with the most safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. Working together often extends over state lines, and although there have been occasional bumps with one state over another, for the most part it has worked quite well.

We are an owner and a member of Tri-State G&T, a cooperative organization which we formed in the 1950's to provide a way to get the most benefit out of the generation and delivery of electricity to us. Over the years, Tri-State evolved to provide electricity to utilities in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming. In order to insure good financing, and be able to build long-term generating and transmission assets, we all entered into long-term contracts pledging to purchase 100% of the electricity that we deliver. This has worked very well until recently.

About ten years ago, we started to see certain states attempt to exert control over Tri-State, which in turn, directly impacts the utilities that are located in other states. We were able to manage this until about 2013. New Mexico was the first state to exert significant control, suspending the electricity rates the New Mexico utilities paid. This created a \$43 million shortfall for Tri-State, that had to be made up by the utilities in the other three states. Colorado also imposed a settlement rate on Tri-State that shifted another \$9

million to the rest of us. Time has progressed and we saw one of the New Mexico members want out of their contract with Tri-State, which resulted in a confidential settlement. Last year, the State of Colorado passed sweeping energy legislation that forced Tri-State to shut down all of their coal facilities in Colorado. The result of this legislative change and additional pressure from the State of Colorado will strand nearly \$1 Billion in Tri-State assets that can no longer be used for energy generation, which each owner must absorb through higher rates. More recently, in 2019, three Colorado utilities requested that the Colorado Public Utilities Commission terminate their contract with Tri-State, at a substantially reduced payment than what the entire membership had agreed to, to avoid financial harm to the remaining owners. Since this has such a significant impact on our wholesale energy rate, we believed that we should be a part of the discussion at the Colorado PUC; however, the PUC denied our petition to be a part of this discussion. These protests resulted in at least one negotiated contract buyout at an amount significantly less than the amount that should have been paid to avoid shifting costs to the remaining owners.

We do not believe that any State should be able to impose regulation that would create a cost that would spill over into our rates in Nebraska, especially since we do not have any way of being represented in that State. We are not opposed to moving to cleaner and potentially more economical ways to generate and deliver our energy; however, we believe that, since we are obligated through our contract to pay these rates, we should not have to pay the costs that are a result of other states regulatory and legislative initiatives.

Recently, a change in Tri-State's Federal exemption allows for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to obtain jurisdiction and oversee the rates Tri-State charges to all of the owners in all four states. This now allows us a more impartial means of settling these cross-state rate issues. We filed litigation in January with FERC, challenging this cross-state issue. This is something your Board did not enter into lightly, but with the understanding that there are millions of dollars in undue rates that are resulting from actions by Colorado and New Mexico we believed we had no alternative. We will keep you updated on the status of this case, but we are confident that we are doing our due diligence in protecting the electric rate payers of Nebraska.

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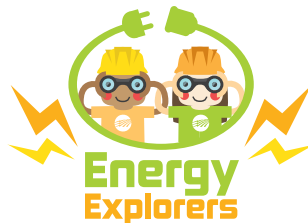
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SPRING EFFICIENCY QUIZ

Spring is just around the corner! Take this quiz to learn how you can help save energy around your home. Hint: Check your work in the answer key below.



1. Sealing air leaks around _____ saves energy and keeps your home comfortable.
A) doors B) windows C) both A and B
2. Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use, like _____.
A) refrigerators B) cell phone chargers C) dishwashers
3. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms, so turn them off when you leave the room to save energy.
A) True B) False
4. LED bulbs typically use _____ less energy than incandescent light bulbs.
A) 25% B) 50% C) 75%
5. Planting _____ around your home can block unwanted heat from the sun.
A) flowers B) shade trees C) vegetables



Answer Key: 1. C 2. B 3. A 4. C 5. B

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