

Ask A Lawn Care Expert

(NAPSA)—**Question:** My husband and I are avid gardeners and have converted our yard into a cutting garden with small plots of grass between our flowerbeds. We have a difficult time maintaining the grass because of the tight space. Any suggestions?

Answer: Many gardeners are finding that a tool from the past—a reel, push-type lawn mower—is the perfect solution. With no engine, a reel mower is lightweight, easy to push, and starts and stops when the user does, making it easier to maneuver through small patches of grass without ruining the plants and flowers.

Question: How often should we sharpen our mower blades?

Answer: That depends on what type of mower you have. Power mowers typically need to be sharpened once a month.

If you use a reel, push-type mower, it can probably go one or more seasons without sharpening. Plus, when the blades of a reel mower do need sharpening, it takes just a few minutes and can be done right at home with a sharpening kit that contains simple instructions, diagrams, a reel crank, and a sharpening compound and brush.

Question: My 9-year old son is very anxious to start mowing the lawn, but I don't want him to get hurt. How can I safely let him help?

Answer: You have good reason to be cautious. Loyola University Medical Center reports more than 2,000 children are permanently disabled each year by power mowers. These injuries are often caused by rocks and debris being propelled from the blades or by touching the hot engine.

Consider letting your son mow



using a reel, push-type lawn mower. By design, manual push-type reel lawn mowers are safer because they operate without an engine, eliminating opportunities for injuries. American Lawn Mower/Great States Corp., the oldest and largest manufacturer of reel mowers, has even designed a reel mower for youth that is lightweight enough for children between the ages of 8 and 15 to use. The child-size reel mower is a real-reel mower, not a toy. Weighing 19 pounds, the brightly painted black and red mower has a 14-inch cutting width, tubular handles that are shorter than handles on adult models, and composite wheels to make the mower easy to handle.

For more information about lawn care or reel mowers, call American Lawn Mower Co./Great States Corp. at 1-800-633-1501 or visit the company's website at www.reelin.com.