

The Active Consumer

Snowthrower Savvy: Picking The Right Model

(NAPS)—It's cold. It's wet. You'd rather be inside under a blanket, but someone has to clear the snow from the driveway and the walk. At last technology has made the back-breaking work of shoveling a thing of the past, with such tools as snowthrowers and snow blades to match just about every need.

Billy Lowe of Snapper, the 50-year-old manufacturer of lawn and snow-removal products, recommends that you ask yourself two important questions before you buy:

1. How often and how much does it snow in my neighborhood?

2. How large an area do I need to clear?

If you rarely receive snow and it usually adds up to only several inches at a time, a single-stage snowthrower should take care of your needs easily. If heavy, deep, regular snows fill your sidewalk and drive, a two-stage snowthrower will probably do the job. If you are clearing a long, wide driveway or parking area, a heavy-duty snowthrower or snow blade is your best bet.

What's the difference?

A single-stage snowthrower has a small engine—usually anywhere from three to five horsepower and clearing widths that range from 17 to 20 inches. They can throw snow up to 25 to 30 feet away from the path being cleared. The rubber-lined auger in the single-stage unit not only pushes the snow into the chute and blows it to the side, the auger also helps to propel the unit down the driveway.

Two-stage snowthrowers have larger engines, usually five to ten horsepower and 22 to 30 inch clearing paths. They can throw snow 25 to 35 feet away. Two-stage snowthrowers churn snow with an auger that forces the snow into the blower fan and then through a chute and off to the side of the area being cleared.

A snow blade pushes snow away at an angle rather than throwing snow to the side. The blade attaches to an existing rear-engine riding mower or tractor and is built more like a typical snow shovel. Additional attachments, such as weights, tire chains and snow cabs can be added to stabilize these machines so they can be used to push heavy, wet snow.



Snowthrowers can be a convenient way to keep walks and driveways clear through the winter.

What should you look for?

Lowe offers these suggestions:

✓ **Check the auger and its fit in the frame.** Especially in a single-stage machine that relies on the auger for moving snow and moving the unit forward, look for a rubber-tipped auger that fits tightly in the frame. A rubber-tipped auger can make the difference between a clean sweep of your sidewalk or drive and an icy residue. Extra snow can pile up between the auger and the frame if there is too much space, causing the auger to block or freeze up, stopping you cold in your tracks.

✓ **Check frame construction and welds.** Unlike lawnmowers which cut grass, snowthrowers move heavy, wet snow so frame construction, welds and weight of the steel used, especially in the auger and the frame, is critical. This is especially important in a two-stage unit that will be moving lots of heavy snow. An inexpensive machine with thin steel won't last long even with a good engine.

✓ **Take your coat and gloves.** Remember that snow removal equipment is used in cold weather. Take your coat and gloves along with you and start the engine and work the controls with your winter gear on. You risk frostbite if you can't operate your snowthrower safely with your cold weather clothes in place.

For more snow equipment tips or for a list of nearby independent dealers, call Snapper at 1-800-SNAPPER or visit them on the Web at www.snapper.com.