

Is it Time for a Robot Lawn Mower?

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Is it time for a robot lawn mower?

Scientists and technicians are working hard to automate everything. If we will soon have automated cars, then why not a lawn mower?

“They already have them,” said my husband.

“No, I mean machines that really work, and are affordable,” I replied.

“Well, that’s another story,” He replied.

Automated lawn mowers are a reality. Some models claim the ability to mow up to an acre and climb steep slopes. They have GPS and can communicate with your phone. When they get tired they return to their charger for a short rest. Many mow in the rain (not such a great idea). Unless you enjoy mowing, and some of us actually do, why wouldn’t you want one?

Here’s why you might not want an automated lawn mower.

- Setup. You’ll need to secure the perimeter of your yard with a strand of wire. This wire tells the robot to stay inside, like an invisible fence. For large areas like we have in the mountains, this is going to be labor intensive. And you hope it doesn’t break, or your robot may end up cutting your neighbor’s yard.
- Power. You’ll need to set up one or more charging stations that the robot can reach when the battery goes flat.
- Slopes. Most robot lawn mowers can handle up to a 20 percent slope. This is not much of a slope. The “lawns” that many of us have are more like wavy fields. You’ll end up doing the worst parts of the cutting yourself.
- Robotic lawn mowers only mow a little bit at a time. If you love mowing a nice clean edge and having it look terrific for four or five days, you won’t be happy with the random pattern of your little robot. Most of the robots chop the grass, not cut it cleanly. This dries out the lawn and looks bad.

Here’s why you might want a robot lawn mower.

- You can afford the best. The really latest technology in automatic lawn mowers is expensive. Really expensive. As in \$3K or more. At this price, your robot will work well, but will still present some of the same problems listed above. The top models will cut cleanly and only miss about 10% of the area.
- Small lawn. If you have less than a quarter acre and the lawn is flat and even, and you have several outside power outlets adjacent to your lawn, then a robot mower may be just the thing.
- You love gadgets, hate mowing, and don't care what the lawn looks like day to day. The best unit out there now for consumers is the Husqvarna Automower 315 at \$1,797. It has a clean cutting set of blade discs, is quiet enough to cut at night, and has a 70-minute battery life.

Should you buy a robot lawn mower? Here's the short answer: unless you are an early adopter gadget freak, I would wait until the technology and prices improve.

Hmm. Christmas is coming up . . .