

Tips to Keep Your Garden Tractor Running Smoothly

If your lawn and garden tractor won't start, it's usually easier and quicker to find the cause by a systematic trouble-shooting procedure than by a hit-and-miss search.

Lawn and garden equipment specialists at Massey-Ferguson Inc., point out that any spark-ignition engine - including single-cylinder versions - has three requirements for proper operation: 1. Fuel supply to the combustion chamber. 2. A spark to ignite the fuel. 3. Adequate compression.

First, check for fuel in the tank. Although the need for

fuel is obvious, this very fact often makes it easy to overlook.

If the tank does contain fuel, make sure the fuel is of the proper kind. Regular grade, leaded gasoline is the preferred choice, but, if it is unavailable, you can use non-leaded or low-lead gasoline. It's also a good idea to buy your gasoline in relatively small quantities (not more than 30-days supply). Thus, you'll be sure of having fresh gasoline with the correct volatility for the season.

Make sure that the fuel shut-off valve is open, and

that the vent hole in the gas cap has not become plugged.

Next, take note of the cranking speed. If the starter seems to have difficulty in turning the engine normally, check the crankcase oil level to ensure adequate lubrication. If the oil level is checked periodically as recommended in your service manual, the oil level should not have become low enough to cause starting difficulty. However, so little time is required for this quick check that it pays to make certain.

Slow cranking can also result from loose or corroded connections between battery cable and starting motor - even though the battery itself is adequately charged.

If a poor connection is suspected, remove nut, use a wire brush to thoroughly clean binding post, nut, and connector on end of battery cable, and reinstall connector, making sure that the nut is drawn up snugly.

Start your check of the ignition system by removing the spark plug and examine it carefully. Its appearance can be the tip-off to possible ignition-system difficulties. The gap between the electrodes should be about equal to the thickness of a dime. If the electrodes are burned, or if the porcelain insulator at

the firing end of the plug is cracked, wet, or coated with wet carbon, the plug should be replaced.

Before reinstalling the old plug or installing a new plug, temporarily bend the outer electrode away from the center electrode to produce a gap of about 1/8 inch. Connect the high-tension wire to the spark plug and lay the plug flat on the metal of the engine. Then crank the engine to see if a spark jumps the gap between the plug electrodes.

If no spark, or only a weak spark occurs, something is wrong in the ignition system, such as dirty contacts or faulty condenser or ignition coil.

If on the other hand, a fat, blue spark jumps the gap, reset the gap spacing to the thickness of a dime, squirt a spoonful of gasoline through the spark-plug hole and reinstall the plug.

High-tension lead from coil to spark plug must be securely in place. Because the rubber insulating cover usually hides the connector, press the connector into place to make sure it has not vibrated loose.

Crank the engine with the starter to see if it will start on the fuel squirted directly into the cylinder. If the engine does not start, the

difficulty is probably due to lack of compression which can be caused by a faulty head gasket, a valve stuck or broken, or incorrect valve timing. In any case, correcting these difficulties is usually a job for your dealer's serviceman.

If the engine starts, but runs only a few seconds before slowing down and stopping, fuel is not reaching the engine. To check out this possibility, disconnect the fuel supply line at the carburetor. If there is not a full flow of fuel from the line, it should be removed and cleaned, along with the fuel tank, if necessary, to remove the obstruction. If there is a full flow of fuel from the line, reinstall it on the carburetor.

If the engine still does not start, fuel probably isn't getting through the carburetor. Again, correcting this is usually a job for your dealer's serviceman.

In addition to fuel, adequate air must be available to the carburetor to provide the correct air-fuel ratio. Remove the air cleaner cover and check to see if the element has become so clogged that the necessary amount of air can no longer pass through it. If the engine can be started with the air cleaner removed, but not with it in place, the air cleaner should be serviced. Do not operate the engine for an extended period with the air cleaner removed.

Reprime and start the

engine. Then when it starts to slow down, gradually close the choke, or use your hand to partially close off the air inlet to the carburetor. If the engine continues to run while you are thus choking it, the air-fuel mixture normally entering the engine is too lean.

This can be due to improper carburetor adjustment, a partially clogged carburetor jet orifice, or a severe air leak that may be at the carburetor throttle shaft, in the inlet manifold.

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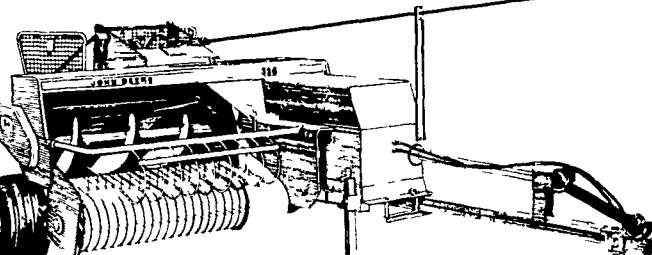
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