

## new (to me) type of mower

Posted by [Nathaniel Bouman](#)  
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[Nathaniel Bouman](#)  
[new \(to me\) type of mower](#)

Registered: 9 years ago  
Posts: 81

June 26, 2023 08:13PM

I tried posting this in "understory management" but it's not there for some reason and this is probably a more appropriate subforum anyway. I'm always on the lookout for relatively affordable, alternate-style tractor mounted mowing systems for getting close to tree trunks. I'm very curious about this "[European tractor scythe](#)" system. The video makes it look like the strings really don't injure the trunk because they are vertically mounted. Could it really be that simple?  
I'd love to hear what you all think.

Nat Bouman  
Growing cider varieties in Zone 5b  
On B.118 at 18X24  
Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania

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[Brittany Kordick](#)  
[Re: new \(to me\) type of mower](#)

Registered: 4 years ago  
Posts: 209

June 26, 2023 10:31PM

Wow, that is a really neat doohickey there. We recently purchased a five foot sickle mower to use under our canopies, and while it isn't perfect, it's getting the job done enough to feel like good progress. Otherwise, this is the sort of thing I would have jumped at trying. Last year, we were actively trying to find a better option for under-tree mowing and hooked up with a friend who was trying to sell an offset pull-behind giant weedwacker thing. It was one of those DR Power tow-behinds, and while it didn't boast a very wide cut, we decided to try it out of desperation, thinking it would be good to test drive something like that anyway, just to see if something along those lines would damage the trees or not.

Similar to your tractor-scythe, it had a guard that physically prevented the rotating plastic ties from getting close enough to harm the trees. In videos you see operators actively hitting trees and fenceposts, so it looked promising to us, and we borrowed this pull-behind weedwacker for an afternoon. While I wasn't trying to hit trees, it happened right off the bat, since I was trying to get as close as possible to the trunks and the sway of the swing arm makes the movement of the implement somewhat unpredictable. Immediately, I concluded that this wasn't going to work, as the guard damaged the trunks, either by smashing the trunk so that it was essentially cut, just not cleanly, or by splitting the bark. I did succeed in killing a 2 inch diameter tree, and from then on stayed far enough away from the trunks that the narrow cut was just not useful at all (we would have had to mow more under the canopy, as well as weedwack close to the trunks). Incidentally, I had the same experience with fence posts. While a tool like this is marketed as something that can just bounce off posts, I found that it really does lightly damage the posts when it bounces off, and if you're mowing with any kind of regularity, even a couple or few times a year, that damage is bound to add up.

Not trying to be a wet blanket because this tractor-scythe looks really cool and different, and it is encouraging to see the operator in the video bounce off small diameter trees, but I would really want to both examine the bumper (maybe it's made of something uniquely soft and non-damaging) and take a test drive . . . around someone else's trees . . . before buying in, personally, now that I know how much damage guards can do. Even with the sickle mower we're using, if I damage a tree, it's not from sawing into it, but from inadvertently slamming the guard against a trunk and smashing it or splitting the bark.

Maintenance-wise, though, a tractor-scythe probably beats a blade-wielding implement any day.

[Kordick Family Farm](#)

Westfield, NC  
Zone 7a

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 06/26/2023 10:38PM by Brittany Kordick.

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[Nathaniel Bouman](#)  
[Re: new \(to me\) type of mower](#)

Registered: 9 years ago  
Posts: 81

June 27, 2023 09:28PM

i looked into one of those DR power fence trimmer PTO units but fortunately a friend warned me off before I got one. I use an old 7' sickle bar but I'm still left with a sizable area to weed by hand. It's hard for me to understand how the strings on a tractor scythe don't injure the tree terribly. Just because they are vertical? Absolutely, I'd like to try one out before I buy it.

Nat Bouman  
Growing cider varieties in Zone 5b

On B.118 at 18X24  
Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania

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[Josh Willis](#)

[Re: new \(to me\) type of mower](#)

October 28, 2023 08:38PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 133

Every time I use a weed whacker these days, I think, oh right, I'm sprinkling microplastic everywhere on my holistic garden. ; ) In little amounts it probably doesn't mean much, but when I'm thinking about sustainable solutions and investments, it is a question so far as how much of that stuff I want to personally spread around, whilst I promote sustainability. Easier for me to think about on our little ~1 acre of fruit trees, though. It looks very convenient for the larger grower.

Earthworks

Zone 7a in West-Central MD

Non-commercial, ~100 fruit trees, dwarf to MM106

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