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Bosch Rotak 34Li lawnmower

A cut above the rest?

by Chris Haslam published on 19 June 2009

Can a pumped up laptop battery really tackle the lawn? We've put Bosch's cordless rotary mower to the test to see if it'll serve up centre court stripes in the Pocket-lint garden.

The Rotak 34Li looks the business. The chunky plastic styling and streamlined dragster design stands it apart from the army of boxy electric mowers out there. The wheels look robust (although they're not rubber), the grass collector hooks up seamlessly and the handle and power arm both feel solid.

At 12.8kg it isn't the heftiest machine on the market, but the lack of bulk makes it surprisingly easy to carry and manoeuvre across the lawn. Thanks to the solidly built 40-litre grass collector though it isn't a compact machine; you'll need a shed or garage to store it, rather than an under stairs cupboard.

The all-important battery and docking system looks as if it has been swiped from Doc Brown's DeLorean. To fit it you have to slide open a plastic cover and insert the brick of a battery into place. No dry ice effects, but it's about as far removed from the usual hover, or sweat inducing two-stroke petrol mower, as you can get.

The 36V 20-cell lithium-ion battery takes 60min to fully charge, and although bulky, the charging base unit is idiot proof and works easily. There's a status indicator button on the battery itself to check on charge level which is a nice touch.

In our test we got at least 20min mowing time from a full charge. Perfectly acceptable for the Pocket-lint postage stamp lawn, but a second battery would be a worthwhile investment for anywhere much bigger than a tennis court, or if you're cutting very long grass (Bosch says it'll do 150-300m²).



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So it looks good, has a quality battery and moves easily, but what about the grass cutting? Well we were pretty impressed with the result all round. The motor fired up in a second and despite sounding like a hairdryer had enough power to scythe through a few weeks of lawn growth. The main body can be raised and lowered using a single lever (the handle is a faff, but hardly a deal breaker) to cope with long and short grass and it handled both with ease.

We made quick work of the lawn and really enjoyed not having to think about extension cables, petrol and electrocution. On the shortest setting we were able to achieve a really close finish and the roller, although pretty lightweight did leave us with a neat finish. It didn't give us Wembley stripes, but we were impressed with the end result.

At first glance the natty red fins behind the front wheels looked, to us, like go-faster decorations, but as it turned out they do a great job guiding longer grass direct into the blades. It's a bit of a gimmick, but one that impressed us none the less.

The grass collector did exactly as it should, but we did get a little frustrated as it had a nasty habit of falling off and spilling grass as we lifted the mower onto its back wheels to turn corners.

VERDICT

Ditching the extension cable can only be a good thing in the garden, and although it isn't ideal for huge gardens the Bosch Rokak 34LI makes the weekly mow a much quicker and altogether cooler experience.

Compared to mains plugged mowers the Bosch holds its own with ease - the lithium-ion battery really is impressive - but all this technology does come at a price. Going wireless will cost you at least an extra £100 compared to a similar spec model.

At a glance

What is it?

Cordless lawnmower

Good

No cables, ultra quiet, cool styling, great results

Bad

Dodgy grass collector, a bit bulky, expensive

Verdict

High quality cordless mower that's easily as good as most plug-in models. The battery life and ease of use stands it out from the pack, but dig deep, it's expensive

Price £254

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10