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## Black and Decker GW350 Blowervac

by Ben Harvard Taylor published on 15 December 2004

Winter is well and truly upon us and time spent in the garden is lessening as the nights draw in. It's cold and the last thing you want to have to do is spend hours tidying up those piles of leaves.

With this in mind we put the Black and Decker Blowervac to the test. Black and Decker say that this design has come about as a result of extensive customer research and this does seem to be borne out in its spec. Changing from blowing to vacuuming is easy, with a quick release mechanism built into the fan unit. The vacuum bag is also simple to fit and empty, although at first attempt we didn't quite get it right and paid the price with a face full of muddy, wet leaves. The 1800w motor certainly helps when you're attempting to vacuum up those stubborn, trodden in leaves.

The Blowervac comes with a special scraper, attached to the bottom of the vacuum nozzle that assists in the lifting of wet leaves. Our garden resembles a quagmire in the wet, but the vacuum did its job and picked up pretty much everything thrown at it. When vacuuming in the wet be sure to wear your dirtiest clothes as any mud picked up rapidly becomes wet slurry running down your leg.

With two speed settings you get the option to have it on very fast, or astoundingly fast. This sometimes means that everything happens a little too quickly, but with practice you get used to the pace of the machine.

When vacuuming, the bag fills rapidly and starts to get quite heavy. The inbuilt shredder slices and dices the leaves so that the bag will convert leave at a 10:1 ratio, hence the weight problem. Even the strap provided doesn't do a great job of taking the weight off and you often end up stooping in an uncomfortable position to complete the job.

The blower is great, although it sends leaves



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flying around the garden in all directions, rather than allowing you to quietly move them into a pile. This would be helped if the nozzle wasn't totally straight, but bent slightly at the end, pushing the leaves along the ground, rather than into the air. However, the blower is ideal for instant garage floor sweeping, or even returning gravel to your driveway when it's all run out over the road.

The only major gripe we have is that it's not petrol driven, so those of you with large gardens may want to consider other models. Even in our 'small' garden the cable kept getting in the way and having to carry an extension cable around soon became tiresome.

## VERDICT

The Blowervac is a good product to have in your armoury if, like us, you're averse to a bit of hard labour involving a rake. For the price it saves a lot of time, but you'll have to decide on whether the size of your garden really warrants investing in this sort of thing.

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## At a glance

### What is it?

A garden vacuum and leaf blower in one

### Good

Excellent suction and easy to use

### Bad

Gets very heavy when full of leaves

### Verdict

A good try and useful in certain circumstances, but with minor flaws

**Price** £70

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**