



"My husband is obsessed with the lawn"



Gardening with a power-tool-wielding loved one has its moments, says Lucy Summers. Pass the Prosecco



● **Lucy Summers** is a garden writer, broadcaster, landscape designer, Chelsea gold medallist and author

The battle of the sexes is alive and well in my garden. On any quiet summer weekend, my husband's obsessive dominion over the lawn has me reaching for the Prosecco, long before the sun has glanced over the yardarm.

For one thing, clearly, I'm not fully equipped to drive our all-singing, all-dancing Honda ride-on. It has nothing to do with the fact that I might abuse the hospitality of his custom-built minibar (the glove compartment contains two cans of continental lager). It's much more likely that my lawn striping skills fall woefully short of the precision with which he manicures the lawn.

Admittedly, my annual Christmas Eve midnight sleigh ride, where the kids' sledges are gleefully hitched to the back of the mower and headlights turned to full glare as we motor merrily about in the snow, has possibly prejudiced my being granted a full licence to drive it. Apparently, it displays a flagrant disregard for the superior quality of the machine.

Then there's the matter of those mystery eBay parcels that are furtively squirrelled away, lest I discover the ex-army night vision goggles that are required for his crack of dawn mole patrol.

He's particularly obsessed with the furry blighters and will stop at nothing to outwit them.

Alarm clocks are feverishly set because he has done research. Yes, friends: apparently moles work a shift pattern, grab some kip and exactly four hours later they're back at it, forcing a grown man to adapt his sleep schedule.

Naturally, moles are clued up on this, since they deliberately choose to dig up the lawn well away from his designated Mole HQ. This is somewhat vexing because inside his enigmatic toolbox is an

eight million kw LED headlamp that no professional mole catcher would be without, bamboo canes to mark the latest run, and a clammy bacon sandwich to sustain his endeavours.

Witnessing your better half in full SWAT gear, a light bulb dangling precariously from his nose, would have most women biting their fists to dampen the urge to laugh.

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Don't even get me started on the strimmer. It's universally acknowledged that women are ill equipped to wield the weapon with any degree of accuracy. It takes every bit of my willpower not to criticise as he undertakes a 'gentle' bit of lawn edging, strimming everything within an inch of its life.

My fabulous day lilies are always the first casualty, then the rose stems are lacerated and, oops, there goes erysimum 'Bowles's Mauve'. There's a brutal haircut in store for the lavender hedge lining the drive because as *we all know* lavender responds fabulously to hard pruning in summer. Apparently we grow a rare non-flowering cultivar! But where my prowess with said instrument of plant torture really wins, is when I have to untangle the whippy, stringy stuff that has wrapped itself around the line, calling hubby's rampage to a halt.

It's not that I harbour any prejudice against power tools per se. They make any gardening chore easy-peasy, but the manner of their application, at least in my household, is questionable. Even the cat makes itself scarce when he hears the whine of a starter cord, or gets a whiff of two-stroke petrol.

No wonder I've just hidden a super-duper new pressure-washer I've been given in the bottom of my wardrobe; I suspect my car is really not up to the tender ministrations my partner may have planned for it. 🌱



Take cover: precision mowing in progress

PHOTOS: ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK