

HOME ELECTRONICS

Gasoline generators rated by hours of power



BARRY JENSEN

We have received a couple inquiries about standby gasoline-powered generators, the ones that you could buy and put in your garage (or cottage) until the power fails.

Most gasoline-powered generators are designed to supply power "on the job," allowing a worker to use his electric tools when there is no nearby source of electric power. A generator used for this kind of portable power doesn't need a large gasoline tank. It has to run just an hour or two, and refilling a gasoline tank is not a big chore. Keep the size of the gasoline tank in mind when you go out looking for a gasoline-powered generator. Gasoline tanks come in sizes rated by how long they keep the generator going: the longer the better. But often you will see a two-hour tank. This is not enough if you want to replace enough electricity to keep your household running electrically for a couple days.

You can stretch the length of time a generator will run between refills by running it at half its rated power (using

a 2,000-watt generator to produce 1,000 watts). This means buying a heavier (and more expensive) generator. But big engines run more smoothly than small engines.

If you plan to run electronic equipment with your generator, be sure to find out whether the manufacturer says its generator will produce the kind of power needed to run electronic equipment. There is a big difference in generating power for a drill and generating power for a home computer.

The power can be pretty "rough" and still do a fine job with a concrete drill. But that power won't do such a good job with the computer.

If you want to run a home computer and the generator you select does not put out smooth-enough power, you'll have to invest in something that will "smooth out" the power.

Generators usually have several electrical outlets. You probably will want to buy several heavy-duty extension cords to carry the power from these outlets. If possible, keep the length of the cords down to 50 or even 25 feet. The longer the extension cord, the greater the voltage drop.

Another concern is the noise your machine will make. If you live in a city

with a noise ordinance, you could very well violate it with a gasoline-powered electricity generator. Check this out.

But if you live in a rural area, or are buying a generator because your cottage power is unreliable, noise may not be much of a problem.

Depending on your planned use, you may want to store gasoline for your generator. When the electricity goes off, service station gasoline pumps won't pump: they are powered by electricity.

If you are concerned about wide-spread power failures (such as those in New York), store some gas — but never in an occupied dwelling. Put some shelf-life extender in the gasoline to keep it from going bad so quickly.

Barry Jensen welcomes your comments and suggestions for topics for future columns. His telephone number is 313-953-2125. This number has voice mail attached, so you can call at any time.

Bonsai society holds show

The Ann Arbor Bonsai Society invites the public to its annual show 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 26-27, at the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro in Ann Arbor.

More than 100 trees will be on display demonstrating some of the best examples of the art form. Vendors will of-

fer plant materials and supplies. Lectures and demonstrations on various aspects of bonsai will be presented. Adult admission is \$2. For more information, call club president John Lindsay at (313) 878-6237.

With this show, the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society celebrates its 25th anniversary.

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