

How to Use a Two-Man Power Post Hole Auger

Call Before You Dig!

Operating a power auger calls for eye and hearing protection, as well as gloves and sturdy boots. But the biggest hazard by far is posed by underground power and gas lines. To prevent that danger as well as the nuisance of severed television cable and telephone lines, simply call the utility companies to have underground lines marked before you dig. They'll come out, usually within 24 hours, to mark underground utility lines so you can safely miss them.

Have Your Layout All Set— Time Is Money

Scrupulously lay out your postholes before renting an auger so you can be using the tool the whole time you're paying for it. Pay close attention to locations and mark the exact centers of the holes with stakes. It's nearly impossible to move or reposition a hole once you've started boring, so it's important to begin in the right spot. If you need wider holes than the auger will drill or if you need to slightly reposition a hole, you can easily carve away the sides with hand tools.

If the ground is particularly hard which happens in the summer, we recommend pre-marking all the posthole sites and digging a shallow pilot pit at each site. Then continuously fill the pit with water over several days until the water has an opportunity to soak down 3 feet, the normal depth post holes are dug to. If you have already started digging with the posthole auger and encounter hard ground, move on to the next hole while someone fills the hole with water and lets it soak. Come back to that hole after it you have dug the other holes and the water has had time to soften the ground.

Operating The Auger

When you turn the throttle of the auger, you'll feel a substantial clockwise force through the handles. You do, after all, have to counteract the torque of the auger digging into the soil. Both operators should brace their left side near the left handles to get their body into the act. If the auger suddenly becomes jammed while digging, the operator should release the throttle to stop the auger rotation or engage the engine kill switch to turn off the machine. Be sure not to dig too deep without cleaning the dirt out of the hole. If you go deeper than 12 in. or so, the auger will be extremely heavy to lift out of the hole, or worse, you can corkscrew the auger in so deep that it'll get stuck.

There are two ways to clear the hole. One is stopping the auger and lifting it and the soil out of the hole and emptying the soil in one pile near the hole. That keeps the soil in one place for easy backfilling and prevents it from scattering over nearby grass. An alternative is to dig down a few inches, then throttle back to slow the turning and pull it free to spin off the collected dirt. Then drop it back down to pull up more soil. This method is faster (and more physically demanding), but dirt will fly everywhere and be harder to reclaim. It's a good method if you're backfilling with gravel or concrete and/or don't care about the mess.

If you're moving the auger more than a few feet to the next hole, shut off the engine and restart it again with the auger resting in the next pilot hole. When you're not using the auger, the best way to take a break is to just shut it off and leave it in one of the last holes you dug. Do not lay power unit on its side with the auger attached. The piston cylinder could become full of fuel and the air cleaner could become

soaked with oil preventing the engine from starting. Detach the auger bit when you are done.

For deeper holes requiring the extension rod dig all the holes first with the unextended auger. Never start holes with the extension rod in place. It's much harder to hoist a 4-ft. plus long auger filled with earth. After the holes are dug to 36 in., attach the extension rod and dig the remaining depths all at once. You may find it easier to simply dig the remaining few inches by hand rather than use the extension rod, especially if fatigue is setting in.

Above all, clear the hole frequently. It can be a gut-busting experience to lift an auger overfilled with earth free of the hole, or worse, free a stuck auger.

Operating Tips

- 1.** Dig a "pilot hole" the same diameter as the auger around the stake that marks the center of the hole. That'll keep the auger tip from wandering when you start the hole.
- 2.** Position the auger in the pilot hole, have your partner steady the machine and start the engine following the All Star Rent's store's instructions.
- 3.** Advance the throttle slowly until the auger begins to spin and let the machine begin boring into the ground. Throttle up as needed.
- 4.** After the auger has penetrated 6 in. or so, release the throttle and pull the auger with its load of earth free of the ground, set it next to the hole and jiggle the dirt off the blade. TIP: If you're trying to keep nearby sod free of soil, place extracted soil on a tarp. Your grass will be pristine after the job's done.
- 5.** Extend holes past the normal 36-in. limit by using an extension rod. First dig all the holes without the extension, then leave the auger in the last hole, extract the shear pin and lift off the power head. Then mount the extension bar and remount the power head with a second shear pin.
- 6.** Start the engine and begin digging again, being careful not to overdig. The whole rig just got a lot heavier and you have to lift a lot higher.

CAUTION: Never start new holes with the extension rod in place. Always know where underground utilities are. A two man power post hole digger can exert a lot of torque if the auger suddenly slows or stops if it encounters a rock or tree root- have the left handle braced close to your body to prevent injury if this happens. The operator should know how to stop the auger from turning and how to shut off the machine before using. Keep children, bystanders and animals clear of the posthole auger at all times while it is being operated.