# This iRobot Has its Mind in the Gutter

iRobot

Best known for its Roomba [1] vacuum cleaner robot, iRobot [2] has reportedly sold 8 million consumer robots over the last 10 years, but not all of them are Roombas. Along with the vacuum cleaners, garage clearing Dirt Dogs and intelligent floor mops [3] is the gutter-cleaning Looj. If that sounds like a joke, it's not. Sure gutter cleaners get no respect, but this robot is about to get a major upgrade with the Looj 330.

The Looj is a pint-sized, 1 lb. robot that drives back and forth through your gutter, using a rubber augur and scrappers to lift and throw debris out of the gutter and onto the ground. To use it, you climb a ladder (not included), place the robot in the gutter and then drive it remotely and wirelessly from the ground.

The latest version builds on this idea and is smaller to handle a wider variety of gutters. It's also more intelligent than the previous two editions, the first of which hit the market in 2005. In addition to featuring iRobot's first Lithium-Ion battery in a consumer product, the Looj 330 is now autonomous. According to iRobot execs, you simply place Looj in the gutter, hit Auto-Clean mode and the Looj senses the dirt, and manages the speed and direction to clean out your gutter.

Remote control cleaning — where you control the direction of the auger, and the speed and direction of the Looj in your gutter — still works. However, iRobot has also upgraded the wireless control to 2.4 GHz, which increases the communication range to between 50 and 100 feet. The older model usually topped out at under 20 feet.

Looj can also handle the hard environment of your disgusting gutter. It's waterproof up to 8 inches of water and you can hose it down when you're done.

iRobot, which recently unveiled a healthcare robot [4], also spent some time focusing on safety. For all its intelligence, the Looj can't climb up your house and into your gutter. Instead, most users attach the Looj to the included belt, climb a ladder, detach the Looj and drop it into the gutter. The problem is that it's often hard to detach the Looj from the belt — fumbling while you're 10, 15 or 20 feet off

the ground is no fun. Looj 330 addresses this issue by moving the belt attachment to the Looj handle. The handle is also much larger and easier to grasp, partly because it's no longer open-ended, but a complete loop. iRobot also changed all the consumer-interaction points on the robot to bright orange so they're easier to find.

At $299.99, Looj isn't cheap, especially for a product you'll use probably twice a year. But if you've ever had to clear out your gutters by hand (I have), you may consider this money well spent.

The Looj 330 goes on sale August 14 at iRobot.com [5] (North America only). What do you think? Would you shell out nearly $300 for gutter-cleaning robot or do you prefer to do it on your own? Share you gutter cleaning philosophy in the comments.

www.mashable.com [6]

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