

# Echo CS-2511TES

by Ade Scott and Adam Jones



## TopHandle Chainsaw

Here we go again – why do manufacturers want to call their saws by long-winded codes. If this was called the Echo Topaz, for no reason other than it was the first name that popped into my head (or maybe it was a subliminal inclination towards this saw being a little gem, semi-precious rather than a diamond) wouldn't that be easier to tell apart from Echo's 6 million other models than a code? We managed to persuade a Swedish harness/hardware manufacturer to switch to names rather than codes so listen up Echo – set a trend and put names to all your kit.

The picture on the right gives a good comparison on the size of the Topaz CS-2511TES compared to the Stihl 150 TC and the 201 T. Obviously the more meaningful comparison is with the 150 but the 201 is so universally used as a team's small tree saw that it's worth noting the difference in size. There is some perspective to contend with in this photo but they are stacked on an 80 degree angle rather than on the flat so the Echo really is the smallest saw here and it is certainly the lightest. That's

noticeable the second you pick it up. Of course, these saws also have to contend with the new generation of battery saws which are particularly suited to pruning but the CS-2511TES is actually



even lighter than the current smallest battery saw. As a pruning saw with a pruning bar it performs admirably, this is no surprise to Echo

devotees who already know how capable Echo top-handles are. One member of our team was using an Echo tree saw 30 years ago and swore by it even when the rest of us were taking the mick and holding

up our Stihls and Huskys as the only pro brands to be seen with. All his other saws were Husqvarna so it's not like he didn't have plenty to compare

with. Still, we all largely ignored the brand even though it has always been grudgingly recognised as the third orange brand for pros and it's made in Japan – how bad can it possibly be? The 2511 follows hot on the heels of the 2510 and I defy you to spot the difference unless you had a 2510 and are already aware of its couple of design anomalies. So the CS-2511TES had a chance to improve upon the 2510TES which aside from the exhaust heat/case conflict was already a pretty good saw. This really is an extension of your arm in a way that few, if any, others can emulate. So much so that you'll often see it bereft of lanyard which is deemed too restrictive to the full reach and ninja-like wielding of this diminutive saw. You'll notice in the photo overleaf that even our own safety-conscious Adam simply clips it on a tool carrier for transport and then uses it one-handed when cutting away from the body. Closer in it has the sloping control handle unlike Stihl which is set at right angles. This doesn't make too much difference when

cutting in the standard vertical plane but when you want to rotate on a sixpence, having the second hand closer to the fulcrum or in this case your trigger hand, really does make a difference. Ours came with a standard pruning bar and Oregon chain but Echo saws take a universal mount well so you're more likely to be able to switch to your favoured bar and chain than you are with a Husky which is a bit fussier about what it lets you bolt on. The Echo Topaz CS-2511TES has some neat design elements – you see that pull cord handle for instance, with its odd curves and indents? You can use that to open the fuel and oil reservoirs with absolutely no chance of dropping a screwdriver on to your ground crew's head. The rear lanyard attachment so wantonly ignored by Adam overleaf is substantial, well located and more solidly attached than the Stihl which we always thought was too easy to dislodge from its mount – or maybe that was the point – kind of like a

breakaway helmet chinstrap that won't garotte you if the helmet snags. Perhaps they had in mind a weak point that would hold during normal use but disengage if the saw got trapped and you needed to get out of the way of a lump falling the wrong way without being lashed to the trapped saw? Anyhoo, the lanyard eye is a good'un and let's face it, as a pruning saw if you're trapped next to a falling lump that's big enough for you to need to escape from it, you're using the wrong saw. It's self-regulating in that respect, it will happily chug through sections almost the same width as the bar but mostly you'll be zipping it through cord wood-sized branches and twigs. In the inset photos over the page you can see a tool-less casing for the air filter with spark plug beneath it. You unclip the bottom section which hinges away exposing the spark plug and access to the air filter housing at the top which hinges upwards. This means that you can carry

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# GEAR REVIEW

out simple checks and cleans in the canopy with no tools – less downtime, improved efficiency. As a saw that is bound to be used one-handed (regardless of safety convention) and with a lot of sword-fencing style wrist manoeuvres I wonder why the trigger handle doesn't have a more tactile grip. That's bound to crop up early in Adam's comments.....

ADAM: Having been a Stihl man forever, I found the echo to instantly need to prove itself. I didn't choose to be in favour of Stihl, it just happened. The first job I had was for a company which was equipped with Stihl tools, hedge trimmers, climbing saws, back handled saws, blowers.... you get the picture. We serviced and repaired everything ourselves which meant that we quickly learnt to look after our kit to avoid unnecessary work and we knew every last screw, thread and connector of each tool. Why am I telling you this? Because I believe that this strong familiarity with a certain brand makes the job of an alternative manufacturer all the more difficult in making its way into your tool cache.

Then Matt from Echo arrived at my front door bearing with him a CS2511tes, packaged but prepared for work. It was very small.

The first impression is that this is not a saw that you would pick out as an all round climbing saw, but this is not its role. This is a pruning saw to rival Stihl's MS150, and even the revered Silky hand saws. It is light, manoeuvrable, well balanced and adequately powered.

Picking it up you realise how small it is, your hand wraps around the handle and pretty much covers the top of the saw. There's no real texture to the handle nor is there a rubberised coating so how the grip would perform in the wet depends very much on the gloves you wear. In the wet the hatched top handle performs well both for a gloved and un-gloved grip. We use the cheap nitrile coated gloves which provides integral grip but a leather palmed glove wouldn't fare so well in this regard. The diagonal top/side handle has even less texture and with it less traction and we found that this allowed for some slippage.

As with most top handle saws the on/off switch is located on top of the handle to the front of the saw. This is the natural position for your thumb to operate this switch but unusually with the Echo you have to pull the switch towards you to shut off the power. Although a minor point it is surprising how much muscle memory can impact on your usage of something new, although it doesn't take long to adjust.

Putting the saw to work began in an apple tree, a perfect habitat for this saw. Small and easily handled the whole job was completed efficiently and with what seemed like a little less effort than usual. The side handle's diagonal line resulted in the saw orienting itself in a downward manner when hung from the harness. I rarely use a tool strop for pruning and have always clipped my saw at my side so for the saw to hang like this was very welcome. When the

need arises, there is a sleek yet robust pull out lanyard ring on the back, which stows snugly within the profile of the body when not in use

With no bumper spikes the temptation to overwork the saw on larger diameter cuts is deterred, which is good because although the power to weight ratio is exceptional, this isn't a 1.8kw tool and it doesn't pretend to be. But at 2.3kg the power output of 1.1kw is second to none, in fact it is 0.1kw more than its nearest comparative saw, which is also heavier! Put to work in line with the demands that you'd put on a handsaw like the Felco or Silky and you've got a first rate tool. So long as you keep to the small stuff there will be little to fault this saw. The small size is achieved by good design and this is something that you can expect from our Japanese friends, small and compact is something that has been refined over generations, this is like the chainsaw equivalent of netsuke. [ED: I had to look that one up!]. However, with small size comes compromise and the fuel tank is a prime example. We found that pruning medium to large apple trees where we relied on the saw for all cuts, we would have to refuel two or three times. That task is simplified with filler caps that are wound finger tight to seal so having a combi spanner handy isn't essential for access. If the fuel and oil caps are too tight for your fingers to manage, the pull start handle can be used to give you some leverage.

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Echo's choice of bar and chain combination is presumably quite generic to cover most

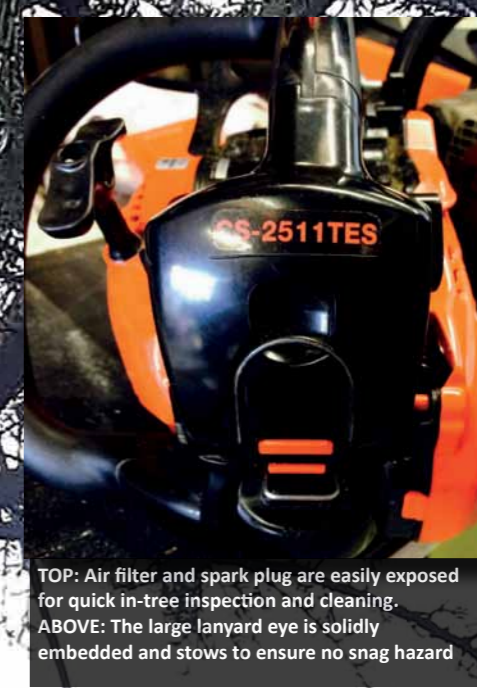
types of job. With a saw of this size you are drawn in to using it to make all of the cuts during a shaping job, including the smallest cuts and those most demanding of accuracy. If there is one place that this saw falls short, it is here; the size of the chain could be smaller. On many cuts we found that skipping would occur when the position of the cut was such that the branch was small enough to move away. Maybe something more like a Picco micro 3 would be a better choice. The Echo's 0.2mm difference isn't much, but it would make a difference.

All members of our team have been impressed (we're not all Stihl men...) and it is loaded every day that we have pruning and shaping on the schedule. Don't be disappointed if it struggles to make a cut, use a bigger saw. We can't comment on longevity, several weeks is not long enough so we may yet have more to say but as a pruning and shaping saw this Echo is an asset and if furnished with a finer chain it becomes one of the finest small saws available.

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Right: Determined to ignore Echo's excellent lanyard eye, Adam likes to stow it on a carry-hook for transport. The Echo tends to sit at a useful angle with the bar out of the way of your legs. BELOW: The cross hatch vents on the casing help restrict debris and the fuel and oil openings are a bit larger than most and easier to fill without spillage.



TOP: Air filter and spark plug are easily exposed for quick in-tree inspection and cleaning. ABOVE: The large lanyard eye is solidly embedded and stows to ensure no snag hazard

**COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATIONS** (Shown for comparison, the Husq T435 is their smallest petrol/gas chainsaw but is not simply a pruning saw as you could fell small Sequoia with it!)

MODEL:	CS 2511 TES	MS150 TC-E	T435
MANUFACTURER:	ECHO	STIHL	HUSQVARNA
ORIGIN:	Japan	Germany	Sweden
COST exVAT inc. bar/chain:	£416 (10"bar)	£460 (12" bar)	£510 \$320 (12" bar)
WEIGHT exc bar/chain:	2.3kg/5 lb	2.6kg/5.7 lb	3.4kg/7.5lb
ENGINE:	25cc	23.6cc	35.2cc
OUTPUT:	1.10kW/	1kW	1.5kW/ 2.01HP
FUEL CAPACITY:	0.19 L/6.4 fl oz	0.2 L/6.7floc	0.26 L/8.8 floc