

Full of surprises. BY JOE SAGE

As a Toyota Corolla, this car is as normal as you would expect, despite being a hybrid. As a Toyota hybrid, this car is more normal than some, by virtue of being a Corolla. If you've wanted the general experience of Toyota's well-known Prius hybrid lineup, but perhaps without its particular personality, then do we have the car for you.

The gen-twelve Corolla, introduced in 2018 as a 2019 model, has advanced considerably in style, features and content. First to arrive was the Hatchback in spring; the sedan was revealed in early November; then in late November, there was another surprise: the first-ever Corolla Hybrid. Layering surprise upon surprise, we almost had to do a double take to realize there had never been a Corolla Hybrid before. (One was introduced in Japan in 2013, but that's basically ignored in US marketing talk.)

We had moved from a 400-hp compact sedan two weeks prior, to a 201-hp compact sedan the week prior, to this, with 121 hp from its gasoline engine, so we didn't expect much performance. It also has a 71-hp electric motor, but the net system

output is still 121 horsepower. But timing is everything. An electric motor (one of two—both charging the battery, only one driving the wheels) provides punch from when you first step on the pedal, an underlay to the gasoline engine until that takes over completely. And it's that EV motor—delivering full torque from that same moment you step on the pedal—that gives the Corolla Hybrid its good kick in the pants.

We've met drivers who considered the car underpowered and others who felt it was quite lively. We fell into the second set. The car's 2850-lb weight, quite light in an era of airbags, side beams and rollover protections (not to mention bearing a hybrid battery), is surely a contributing factor. But mostly it's the timing of that electric motor torque.

Available (for now) only in a lower trim level, the Hybrid LE is not as showy as an upper-trim gasoline model (inset), but it can provide that powertrain magic and still beat those models' prices. You won't give any of that much of a second thought as you appreciate living with the Hybrid's biggest and best trick—fuel mileage above 50 in all driving cycles (as EPA rated, though our results driving aggressively, were in the 40s).

Meet a perfectly normal four-door sedan with stellar fuel mileage, now in a conventional package already popular with millions for its own reasons. ■



Corolla XSE sedan



Corolla Hybrid LE sedan

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	1.8L 4-cyl alum DOHC 16v VVT-i
MOTORS	two motor/generators: MG2: drive; MG1 & MG2: battery charging
BATTERY	Ni-MH w Hyper-Prime Nickel
GASOLINE ENGINE OUTPUT	121 hp / 105 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTORS OUTPUT	71 hp / 105 lb-ft
NET SYSTEM HORSEPOWER	121 hp
TRANS	electr controlled planetary type CVT transaxle
DRIVETRAIN	FVD
SUSPENSION	F: indep MacPherson strut, stblzr bar; R: multi-link, stblzr bar
STEERING	elec pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 10.8 vented / R: 10.2 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	15" alloy / P195/65R15 AS
LENGTH / WB	182.5 / 106.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	35.6 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.1 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	38.3 / 37.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.0 / 34.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	13.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	2850 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	11.4 gal
MPG	53/52/52 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE **\$22,950**

INCL: Safety Sense 2.0 (smart cruise, pre-collision w ped detect, lane depart w steering assist, lane trace assist, auto high beams, road sign assist), keyless entry/start, 1-touch pwr windows, black sport mesh grille, bi-LED headlights/DRLs, LED tails/brakes, color-keyed pwr heated side mirrors, fabric 6-way driver / 4-way psngr seat, 8" touchscreen, 6-spkr audio, Bluetooth, USB media & charge ports, Apple/Siri, 60/40 rear seat, 7" TFT info display, auto climate.

OPTIONS: frameless Homelink mirror (175), alloy wheel locks (67), carpet mat pkg (249), body protection pkg (side moldings, rear bumper protector, door sill enhancements, 467), paint protection film (395).....1353

DESTINATION CHARGE

TOTAL **\$25,233**

TOYOTA COROLLA LINEUP		2020	2019
	TRANS	SEDAN	HATCHBACK
L	CVT	\$19,500	
LE	CVT	19,950	
SE	CVT	21,950	\$21,240
	6MT/iMT	22,650	20,140
Hybrid LE	CVT	\$22,950	
XLE	CVT	23,950	
XSE	CVT	25,450	24,240
	iMT		23,140