

What's coming

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Among the updates on the 2004 Imprezas: The single round headlights of earlier models are gone, replaced by four-element headlights; there are new hood character lines; and side air bags are added to the front seats. Subaru also introduces a high-powered model to its Forester line in June. The 2004 Forester 2.5 XT will have a turbocharged and intercooled 2.5-liter boxer engine capable of 210 horsepower, up from 165 in the Forester's non-turbo four-cylinder.

Suzuki

Suzuki continues with its lineup of Vitara and Grand Vitara SUVs and Aerio cars. But starting in 2004, Suzuki will expand its vehicle line with the addition of two new sedans — the 2004 Verona and Forenza — that will be built by the new GM Daewoo Auto & Technology plant in South Korea. Japan-based Suzuki is a partner in the new company.

Toyota

Toyota's big news is a bigger, improved and more powerful Sienna minivan. The 2004 model, arriving in dealers now, is more along the size of the Chrysler Town & Country or Honda Odyssey.

It incorporates a number of features already found on other vehicles, such as third-row seats that fold flat into the cargo floor cavity so they don't have to be hauled out. There's a power liftgate, too — a feature that was pioneered by Chrysler.

But the new Sienna offers a wealth of new features often seen on luxury cars, including all-wheel drive and rear camera. Power comes from a new 230-horsepower 3.3-liter V-6 mated to a new five-speed automatic transmission.

Toyota's re-engineered and redesigned 2004 4Runner, which was launched late last year with a V-8, now is available with a new, 245-horsepower, 4-liter V-6.

Volkswagen

Volkswagen enters the SUV market in July with its 2004 Touareg, which shares its platform with Porsche's Cayenne.

The Touareg is positioned as a luxury SUV capable of going off-road. It looks something like a tall station wagon.

Two models are slated — one with a 220-horsepower, 3.2-liter V-6, the other a 310-horsepower, 4.2-liter V-8. All Touaregs come with all-wheel drive.

VW celebrates 20 years of the GTI pocket rocket in North America with a 2003 GTI 20th Anniversary Edition. The new model due in showrooms in the spring has a six-speed manual mated to the GTI's 180-horsepower, 1.8-liter, turbocharged four-cylinder and rides on a lowered sport suspension and 18-inch Z-rated tires. Just 4,000 Anniversary Editions will be available.

Volvo

Volvo's XC90 SUV is now available with two-wheel drive. Previous models only were all-wheel drive.

Volvo powers up its S60 and V70 models with a new, performance R series by May. A 2.5-liter, inline, five-cylinder engine generates 300 horsepower and 296 foot-pounds of torque for the S60 R and V70 R, providing 0-to-60-mph time of less than 5.6 seconds, according to Volvo.

There's a choice of transmissions — a five-speed Geartronic automatic and a six-speed-manual. Both cars are all-wheel drive.

Volvo's first large front-drive car, the S80, arrives this summer as an early 2004 model.

A high-tech continuously controlled active chassis system helps provide a comfortable ride, and all-wheel drive is now offered.

Three engines are available for the S80. They are a 194-horsepower, 2.9-liter, inline five-cylinder, a 208-horsepower, 2.5-liter, turbocharged, inline five-cylinder and a 268-horsepower, 2.9-liter, twin-turbocharged inline six-cylinder.



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