

# The Right Tools

## Help You Master Your Garden

by John Bruce

There are so many different types of gardening tools available. How do you know which ones you'll really need?

For starters, you'll need something to dig with—shovel or a spade. A shovel is typically a scoop for mixing or moving material from one place to another. A spade is designed for digging. The blade is straighter than a shovel's and is made to be pushed into the soil.

Long-handle tools usually offer better leverage and reach and allow working from a standing position. The handle may be either straight or have a D-shaped grip. With some long-handle pruners, extensions may be available.

Short-handle tools are lighter, usually less expensive and more compact to store. They let you work in confined spaces or while kneeling. Common short-handled tools include hand pruners and clippers, hoes, garden trowels and cultivators.

Using short-handle tools means spending time low to the ground. A good, firm foam pad or strap-on kneepads can help prevent aches and pains. Choices range from simple pads to foldable seats.

### BASIC AND NOT-SO-BASIC TOOLS

- ✿ **Garden knives.** Useful for cutting twine and plant ties and opening bags and plant root balls, the safer ones have non-collapsible fixed blades.
- ✿ **Garden rakes.** A heavy rake with short, stiff tines supported by a flat or bow-shaped metal frame is useful for raking heavy materials, removing rocks and other debris and smoothing the soil for planting.
- ✿ **Leaf rakes.** A light rake with long, thin, flexible tines designed to gather leaves or other light materials.

- ✿ **Hand pruners and shears.** Used for removing flowers, lightweight foliage and small branches.

- ✿ **Hoes.** For weeding and scraping the soil's surface, hoes include the traditional flat scraping or chopping types and the loop, scuffle and stirrup styles.

- ✿ **Long-handled pruners and loppers.** These long-handled versions of hand pruners provide greater reach and leverage, allowing for larger items to be cut.

- ✿ **Mattocks.** A heavy, flat-bladed tool designed to dig or grub in the soil on one end, with a sharp point to break up heavy or rocky soils on the other.

- ✿ **Spading forks.** Used to open up the ground, dig bulbs, incorporate soil amendments and turn compost, they have heavy, flat tines and often a D-shaped handle.

- ✿ **Tillers.** A power tool that breaks up large areas of compacted soil and incorporates soil amendments.

- ✿ **Cultivators.** A tool with heavy curved or bent tines or sometimes multiple spinning blades designed to open up and aerate the soil. Styles with tines are also used to mix materials and effectively loosen weed roots.

### NEWER TOOLS

- ✿ **The Weed Wrench** ([weedwrench.com](http://weedwrench.com)), a manually-operated, all-steel tool designed to remove woody weeds by uprooting them.



- ✿ **The Easy Bloom Plant Sensor** ([easybloom.com](http://easybloom.com)) shows which vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers, trees, shrubs or houseplants will grow where, indoors or out.

### STORING YOUR TOOLS

Avoid clutter and damage by keeping your tools organized and dry. There's a tremendous selection in stores and online of storage racks, systems, tool organizers, outdoor closets and sheds. A basic, simple storage idea is to use a bucket caddy with cloth pockets that wraps around a 5-gallon bucket. It's convenient for storing small tools and you can dump weeds in the bucket. Another idea for keeping small tools, seeds, sunscreen and other items handy is to mount a jumbo mailbox on a post near the garden. 📧

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