

Tool Quality Considerations

Keep in mind...

Higher tool quality correlates to higher cost

Metal

- Construction
 - Forged generally better than stamped. Forged tools are typically heavier, and will hold an edge better
 - One piece construction usually more durable than welded
- Material
 - Steel is stronger than aluminum
 - Stainless steel does not rust, doesn't hold an edge as well as carbon steel

Tool Shafts

- Wood
 - Should be hardwood, ash most common. Hickory is premium
 - Look for clean grain, aligned with length
- Fiberglass
 - Considered stronger than wood
 - Less susceptible to weathering, cracking, splitting
 - More difficult to replace than wood
- Steel
 - Strongest, least flex





Digging Tools

Shovels, Spades, & More

Shovel Considerations

- Shaft length and material (wood, fiberglass, steel)
- Handle or not? (D/DY or T)
- Blade thickness (16 gauge or less recommended, or forged)
- Open or closed back
- Forward step for foot
- Weight
- Angle of blade (shovel lift)
- Expected use



Trowels, soil scoop, hori hori



Pick & Mattox



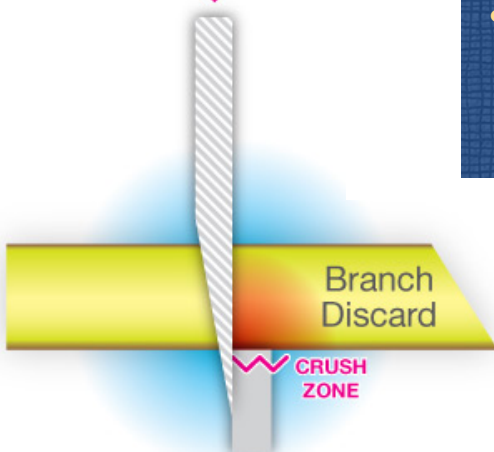
Post hole digger

Pruning Tools

Cutting, Pruning, Sawing...



Bypass Blade



Hook

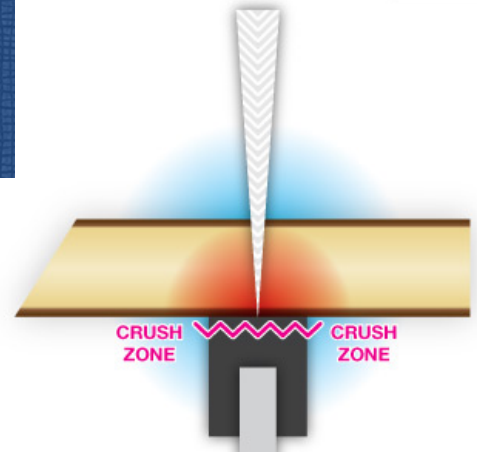
Bypass vs. Anvil

Pruning shears and loppers

- Bypass pruners make a cleaner cut, and reduce the risk of damage to the tree and should be the tool of choice.
- Anvil pruners are better for cutting up dead and removed wood.



Anvil Blade



Anvil





Leaf/litter rakes



Soil Rakes



Maintenance Tools

Weeding, Raking, & More



Straight and triangular hoes



Shuffle hoe



Clean-up containers



Cobrahead weeder



Basic hand weeder



Hori hori



Crack and crevice weeder

Tool Care Tips



BASIC TIPS

YEARLY INSPECTION

A yearly inspection is a good idea. Do this at a quiet time of year gardening-wise. Check the sharpness of all tools, check the handles, and do any appropriate maintenance.

HANDLE REPLACEMENT

Remember, you can replace the handles on most tools. Think about repair before replacement.

LABEL YOUR TOOLS

Think about marking your tools with your name, especially if you loan tools, or work in a common area. Use a bright color so you'll see them lying in the grass when you quit for the day!

HATS AND GLOVES TOO!

Don't forget the most important "tools" you bring with yourself;; remember to use a good hat, some sunscreen, sturdy shoes, and a pair of gloves!

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If you only remember two things about tool care, let it be:

Clean and Sharpen your Tools

Cleaning Tools

Clean your tools after using them; shovels, forks, hoes, pruners, saws, everything. Doing it manually (with gloves) usually works, but you can use a bristle brush, a garden hose, a putty knife; whatever works.

Metal Cleaning Tips:

- Don't store your tools when they're wet! Use the sun, a towel or rag to dry them.
- For rusted metal: remove the rust with a wire brush. If the rust is heavy, soaking it in white vinegar can help as a start. Steel wool, and sandpaper can be helpful too..
- Remember that fertilizer or other chemicals are especially corrosive, making it more important to clean.
- Cover steel surfaces with a light coat of oil before putting tools away. An ideal way to do this is to use a rag soaked with motor oil.

Handle Cleaning Tips:

- For wood handles, clean and check for splinters or cracks. Splinters can be sanded down, cracks call for a replacement handle. Occasionally coat the handle with linseed oil, applying several coats until the wood no longer absorbs the oil. You'll be left with a shiny surface more resistant to dents.
- For fiberglass or plastic: clean with a rag and check for damage.

Hand Tool Cleaning:

- Trickier because of the moving parts, remove all dirt and moisture. A tip: use a foaming bathroom cleanser, let soak, then use a wire brush to remove heavy residue. Repeat if necessary.
- Once clean, dry the tool thoroughly. Placing a tool in direct sun is a good way to make sure it's dry inside and out.

- When dry, apply a light coating of household or motor oil. WD-40 isn't recommended because it leaves a sticky residue that attracts dirt, but it's all right if that's all you have. It's handy to have an oil soaked rag for wiping exposed surfaces. Work a few drops of oil or greaseless lubricant into any pivot point.

Sharpening Tools

Keep your tool blades sharp to reduce stress on the tool and you. Remember, even a badly sharpened tool will work better than a dull one.

- If you aren't comfortable doing your own sharpening, if your tools are very dull, or nicked, or if the tool is very expensive... it may be better to have a professional do it.
- Pruners may need to be disassembled to access the blade (but it's more convenient to use a small sharpening tool). Use any commercial tool to sharpen blades: carbide, stone, or ceramic. A pocket sharpener is easiest for small tools, a bench stone or grinder may be useful for larger ones such as an axe or maul.
- Only sharpen the beveled edge, maintain the original bevel angle as much as possible. Don't thin the blade so much that you risk bending the blade when you cut.
- A tip: you can use a marker to color the bevel and then sharpen until all the color is evenly removed.
- It isn't necessary to keep the blade of a shovel sharp, just remove any metal that folds back on itself. Using a flat edged file will work most of the time, or a coarse sharpening stone. It's handy to have a vise to hold the tool as you file.