

TOOL STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE

Ten tools community gardens should have include: a trowel, a hand fork, a hoe, hand pruners, a watering can, a heavy duty fork, shovels and spades, a wheelbarrow, gloves, and a hose. These tools will need to be stored and maintained for long life.

Storage options:

- ⊗ Recycled metal shipping containers make excellent storage sheds, and are almost vandal-proof.
- ⊗ Try using a large wooden box for both tool storage and a bench.

General tool tips:

- ⊗ Buy the best quality tools you can afford - they will last longer
- ⊗ Good quality hardened steel blades hold an edge better and longer
- ⊗ Stainless steel, cast aluminum & the newer "space age" materials don't rust
- ⊗ Maintain and care for tools regularly throughout the growing season and do a final thorough cleanup in the fall before storing tools
- ⊗ Hang tools up rather than resting them on their points
- ⊗ Don't leave tools outside in the elements - always bring them in and wipe them off after use

Tool maintenance:

- ⊗ Remove all dry, caked on dirt from metal surfaces of tools
- ⊗ Rub with oil and wipe with a dry rag - oiling will prevent rust from forming
- ⊗ Wood handles - rub with a rag soaked in boiled linseed oil and let the oil absorb into the wood, helps prevent drying & cracking that can lead to splinters
- ⊗ Check and tighten any screws or bolts along handles
- ⊗ Keep a bucket (approx. 5 gal) of coarse sharp sand mixed with about 1 quart of clean motor oil in a sheltered tool area. After using shovels, etc. stab the metal end in the sand mixture a few times and wipe dry; sand will knock off the dirt and oil will prevent rusting
- ⊗ Sharpening: You can sharpen cutting edges with a metal file for most larger tools. For pruners and loppers, remove any sap with soapy water or turpentine; add a drop of oil to pivot points; sharpen with a good diamond or ceramic sharpening stone and check sharpness regularly as a good edge will do a more efficient job and is easier on the plant and the gardener
- ⊗ Note about sharpening: If you aren't sure what you're doing, take your tools to a hardware store or knife-sharpener for help. It could be more expensive to fix a damaged blade.

Don't forget!

- ✓ Have new projects decided upon by the group, including whether or not to introduce a new feature and what it will look like.
- ✓ Keep it simple & easy to maintain in terms of labor, cost, & replacement of parts.
- ✓ Don't overdesign a project or there is a greater risk that it won't succeed.

Adapted from GardenForever.com, Toronto FoodShare, & Common Ground Garden Program (CA)