



Garden Tool Maintenance

The long, cold winter months offer a great opportunity to clean and maintain your garden tools. Tools that are well-maintained last longer and work better. But of course it's hard to find time to spend on them during the busy growing season! Here are some steps you can take now to protect your garden tools and get them ready for spring.



Well-used garden tools at a Grow Pittsburgh Edible Schoolyard site.

- Knock off any large clods of mud and dirt.
- Wash and dry your tools.
- Use steel wool or a wire brush to remove rust.
- Inspect the wooden parts of the tools and sand any rough spots. Now is a great time to replace broken or cracked handles.
- Use a file or sharpener to hone the blades on loppers, pruners, and harvesting knives. Hoes and shovels also work best with a refined edge, so sharpen those as well.
- Apply oil to all metal and wooden parts of the tools, and wipe off the excess. (Fiberglass handles don't need to be oiled.) Mineral oil, pure tung oil, and boiled linseed oil are all good choices.
- Store tools inside or in a location away from precipitation and sun.
- A bucket of sand with a little oil mixed in can be a great place to store shovels and hoes. The sand and oil mixture cleans and oils the blades, protecting them from rust.

When spring arrives, your tools will be clean, honed and ready to work!