



How-To: **MAINTAINING TOOLS**

Tools that are maintained well last longer and work better. But of course it's hard to find time to spend on them during the busy growing season! Take some time in the fall or winter months to protect your garden tools and get them ready for spring.



TOOLS READY FOR USE AT
AN EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD
PITTSBURGH GARDEN



TOOLS READY FOR LENDING
AT GROW PITTSBURGH'S
GARDEN RESOURCE CENTER

CLEAN

- Knock off any large clods of mud and dirt.
- Wash and dry your tools.
- Use steel wool or a wire brush to remove rust.

IMPROVE

- Inspect the wooden parts of the tools and sand any rough spots.
- Remove and 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.

PROTECT

- 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.

PLAN AHEAD

- Create a cleaning bucket for your tools. Fill a 5-gallon bucket three-quarters full with sand. Mix in a little mineral, tung, or linseed oil. During the gardening season, wipe the dirt and mud off your hand tools and plunge them into the bucket a few times before storing. This process will reduce rust and keep tools shiny and well-oiled throughout the season.