



Gardennote

Care of garden tools

By Harald Hoffmann, Biosecurity Communications, South Perth

It is not unusual to find rusted garden tools exposed to the weather in corners of the home garden. Garden tools can be the most neglected of all tools and equipment. If garden tools are not habitually washed down and sterilised, they may play a major role in spreading diseases between garden beds (spades, rakes and hoes), viruses between plants (secateurs and pruning saws) and weeds between lawns (lawn mowers).

This Gardennote describes the importance of good quality, well maintained and sterilised tools.

Tool quality

It pays to invest in good-quality tools. Pruning saws should be firm and sharp. Spades, forks, hoes, rakes and shovels should be sturdy with solid handles and hardened steel parts, which do not bend easily. Secateurs and other cutting tools should have removable blades and adjustable mechanisms.

Machines, like lawn mowers, whipper snippers, chain saws and hedge trimmers should be easy to clean and sharpen.

Storage

Keeping the tools in a dry shed, preferably on a hanging rack, after they have been washed and sterilised is a major step towards good 'tool-care'. Smaller tools should be located for easy access on a shelf.

Proper storage will prevent the metal parts from rusting and the wooden handles from disintegrating.

Store chainsaws and hedge trimmers with their cover in place, to prevent injuries.

Tool maintenance

Make sure electrical tools are safe, which means they are properly insulated. If the power cord is damaged have it replaced. It is very important to prevent electrical tools from getting wet.

Keep your wood handled tools in good shape by regular sanding and application of boiled linseed oil. This will prevent the wood from drying out, cracking and splintering.

Apply some lubricant to the movable parts of your tools, to ensure smooth operation and to prevent rust from forming.

If rust has already formed, use a suitable rust-remover to clean these tools up.

Simple sharpening tools like a file or a hand held sharpener can be used to keep your tools effective.



These garden tools have been cleaned and stored in a shed away from the floor.

Secure your tool and use a file to sharpen the angle, where the tool was previously sharpened. Push the file in one direction until the entire edge is shiny. Protect the sharpened edge against corrosion by applying a small amount of grease.

For smaller tools like pruning shears or loppers, use a small diamond stone for sharpening. The diamond stone can be used like a file. Secure the blade of your tool and file down the previously sharpened edge. Then switch to your fine side and sharpen using the same angle. Your edge is now ready for use.

Important disclaimer

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If you feel the edge starting to get dull again, you can skip the coarse grit and just use a few strokes with the fine stone to keep your tool in good shape.

Keeping tools clean and sterile

Because digging tools like spades, trowels, hoes and garden forks as well as wheel barrows are exposed to dirt and moisture, they transmit soil fungi, weeds and nematodes between garden beds. They should be cleaned and preferably sterilised after every job.

Wash the dirt off under pressure with your garden hose and if needed, give the tools a scrubbing with a brush. Disinfect the tools with a 2 per cent solution of household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) before storage or using them in a different location. Dry your tools thoroughly before putting them away.

Tools, which come into contact with plants, like secateurs and shears, may transmit fungi and viruses. They should be cleaned and sterilised between trees. Use turpentine, to remove stubborn sap, wipe and sterilise the tool. Remember; be careful as you wipe the blades as they are very sharp.

If any rust has built up on your tools, remove it with a rust remover.

Disinfectants for garden tools

Alcohol, household cleaners and bleach can be used to sterilise tools. Choose a disinfectant that is readily available, affordable and relatively safe to handle. Some disinfectants, which are used for pruning, are phytotoxic and need to be dried off before use on the next plant. Avoid cutting active, oozing cankers; wait until they dry.



Clean lawnmowers won't spread weeds.

Lawn mowers

To maintain lawn mowers, clean air filters and replace the rotary blades regularly. Be aware that fuel, which is stored longer than 6 weeks may deteriorate.

In Perth, Bindii is one weed that is often transmitted when lawn mowers move around different properties. Make sure to remove all leftover grass and weeds before usage on another lawn.

Chain saws and mechanical hedge trimmers

These mechanical tools may jam regularly due to build up of sap and frass, from the cutting process. They need to be regularly cleaned with a solvent (kerosene or petrol) and lightly coated with oil before storage.

Sprayers and fertiliser spreaders

Clean out the sprayer with a small amount of soap, dissolved in water and rinse out thoroughly after use.

Empty and dry sprayer, then store in a dry place.

Regularly clean the nozzles and replace defect seals.

To prevent cross-contamination, it is advisable to keep separate sprayers for herbicides and insecticides.

The fertiliser spreader needs to be thoroughly washed out after use, as any residue fertiliser is very corrosive.



Before storage, fertiliser needs to be removed from spreader.

Specimen identification requirements

When sending or delivering samples, the following information is required:

- Collector's name, location (where the specimen was found), full address, telephone number and e-mail address, description of the damage and date collected.

Department of Agriculture and Food
Pest and Disease Information Service
3 Baron Hay Court, South Perth WA 6151

Freecall: 1800 084 881

E-mail: info@agric.wa.gov.au