

Take care of your garden tools and they will take care of you! Well, that's easy to say but if you're like most people, the last thing you want to do after a day of gardening is clean shovels.

Seriously, well-maintained tools will last longer and make your gardening work easier. After every use, clean, as described below, and store them off bare ground away from moisture.

1. Use a stiff-bristled brush to remove dirt.
2. If necessary, follow up with a damp rag, then dry the tool.
3. If there is a heavy buildup of sap or similar gunk, scrape with a paint scraper or sharp chisel while taking care not to gouge the metal. Clean with alcohol or household foaming bathroom cleaner. Follow up with fine steel wool.

4. If rust remains, clean it away with a wire brush, steel wool or sandpaper.
5. When the blade is clean, wipe the surface with a lightly oiled rag. Do not use any petroleum based oil. You'll just end up transferring that oil to the garden soil. Use boiled linseed oil or any natural product such as vegetable or olive oil. The purpose of the oil is to create a barrier between the metal and oxygen/water that creates rust.
6. Wooden parts should have rough spots or splinters trimmed off and sanded smooth. Maintain a coating of linseed or mineral oil.
7. You can sharpen with a range of tools, but most gardeners find that a flat file will work well. Wear eye protection and some heavy gloves to prevent metal

slivers getting in your eyes or under your skin and to prevent cuts from your newly sharpened tools. This work can sometimes be dangerous and tricky. The garden tool should be firmly secured and the sharpening must be done at the correct angle. There are professional services available. If you are inexperienced at sharpening, we recommend hiring such a professional.

At a community garden, aim for 1 & 2 above after each gardening session. The remaining steps should be done at least once a year.

Check out these videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1KSqC1yEeU>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vice3CYMBXg>

