



Tools for Gardeners

Good tools make the work in my landscape much easier. I get the majority of my work done with just five tools, so if you have a gardener on your gift list consider one of these ideas.

Hori-Hori - Garden or Soil Knife

If there was just one gift I could give a gardener, this would be it - a Japanese gardener's knife or hori-hori. It's absolutely indispensable and for me, works better than a trowel or hand rake for digging, planting and weeding. It's also great for dividing plants and planting bulbs.

It's a simple tool, basically a blade and handle. One side of the blade is serrated and I use it to cut through perennial roots when I'm dividing plants or cut away the roots of a root-bound plant. The other side of the blade is smooth.

Some garden knives have a notched tip, called a dandelion fork, which is used to pop dandelions out of the ground. However, after trying several models myself, I prefer a knife without the notched tip. I find the notch gets in the way when I'm digging and gets snagged on roots, bits of mulch or other things in the ground. I prefer a knife with a solid pointed tip.

For a great review of several soil knife models and links where you can purchase them, take a look at The Garden Tool Review by Genevieve Schmidt. <http://www.gardentoolreview.com/hori-hori-soil-knife-review/>.

Hand Pruners

A really high quality pair of bypass hand pruners are another great gift. Bypass pruners are much preferred by serious gardeners because they are less damaging to plant stems than anvil-type pruners, which crush the stem as it is cut. Check out this Classic Wood Handle Bypass Pruner from Earl May, <https://shop.earlmay.com/products/classic-wood-handle-bypass-pruner>.

Hand pruners are best for making small cuts, on stems around ½ inch or less in width

Long-handled Loppers

Loppers should be used for medium sized branches ½ to about 1 ½ - 2 inches in width. (For anything larger than 1 ½ - 2 inches in width, use a handsaw.) Again, bypass loppers are preferred over anvil-types.

Loppers have a couple great advantages – the long arms make it easier to reach into the center of large plants and they give you better leverage for removing larger branches. Telescoping loppers have adjustable length handles, making them flexible for a variety of pruning jobs.

My next garden purchase will be ratcheting loppers. These allow you to perform a cut using several compressions of the handles. Each time the ratcheting mechanism maintains its grip as you reposition your hands or get a better grip.

Garden Products Review has a good list of features to look for in the loppers you choose, <https://gardeningproductsreview.com/best-loppers-pruning/>.

Shovels

I use two types of shovel in my landscape – a standard round-headed shovel and a straight-blade tile spade. The pointed tip of the round-headed shovel makes it easier to dig into hard soil or dense organic matter (which is common in my zoysia grass lawn), while the straight-bladed tile spade works best for me to edge my landscaping beds. But it's amazing how many different shovel designs there are, each with a specific feature or function. I'm now looking at a couple new shovel designs to try in my landscape – the Earth Talon and HERshovel.

The head of the Earth Talon shovel looks like a bear's claw to me. It features a two inch pointed tip meant to focus your efforts and make digging in hard or rocky soil easier.

Another great alternative, especially to save wear and tear on women's arms or wrists, is the HERshovel. The head of this shovel is a standard rounded-head, but it has a shorter handle and a large D-shaped grip, which allows gardeners to use both hands at once or any grip that is most comfortable.

Check both out on the Gardening Products Review website, <https://gardeningproductsreview.com/category/digging-2/shovels-spades/>.

I'll admit, even for a garden nerd like me, a shovel isn't the best gift to find under my Christmas tree, but a gift certificate is always another good option along with a cute card for the gardener in your life - "Digging you during the holidays and all year round."

Your Suggestions are Welcome!

Is there a lawn and gardening topic you would like to learn more about? Sarah Browning is an Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension and can be contacted by phone 402 441-7180, by mail at 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE 68528: or by e-mail sarah.browning@unl.edu.

Images from Pixabay.

Caption

#1 Anvil type pruners compress stems as they are cut, potentially causing damage to the stem and additional dieback.

#2 Loopers are useful in making cuts to branches with a 1/2 or larger diameter.

#3 Bypass pruners cut like scissors, not compressing stems as they are cut, and are the preferred type of pruner.