

# Garden Tools

---

Agricultural Engineering Extension: Karen Funkenbusch, MA, and Willard Downs, Ph.D.

---

Using the proper tool is a vital part of successful gardening. Every gardener knows that, without proper tools, no garden will give you the success you desire. In adapting the garden to the needs of every gardener, a variety of tools are available. The tools discussed here are available at a variety of stores, as well as online at various websites. Whatever style of tool you choose, there are a few universal pointers that will help you as you garden:

- Use tools with the right size grip - To find the right fit, make a circle with your index finger and thumb. That is the size the grip of your tools should be.
- Try to find tools with a depression or ridge in the handle for you thumb to rest on, this will keep your hand in the proper alignment.
- Use tools with longer handles to cut down on the need to bend over or kneel.
- Keep tools sharp and in good condition to conserve energy.
- Use the lightest weight tool possible to complete tasks.
- Work to keep your back straight and your joints in neutral positions to prevent joint stress.
- Use tools with a soft, pliable handle for easier gripping.
- Use non-slip surfaces so not to waste energy gripping tools too tightly

## Ergonomic Tools:

Ergonomic tools are designed to keep the body in neutral positions. This lessens the amount of stress on joints and allows you to work longer and exert less energy. Ergonomic tools generally are made with large, soft handles. This allows you to get a better grip on the tool. In addition, ergonomic tools have a textured, no slip handle, which also allows for a better grip. The tool should also have a depression or ridge on top of the tool for your thumb to rest against. This keeps your hand and wrist in a neutral position as you garden.

## Enabling Tools:

Enabling garden tools are specially designed for disabled gardeners. They are specially designed to use less energy and to help keep the body in proper alignment. Some common enabling tools are pistol grip handles, telescopic tools, arm and wrist braces and **Sure Grip** tools.

## Adapted Tools:

Adapting garden tools is the cheapest way to modify your tools. It doesn't necessarily involve the purchase of any new tools and is especially useful if you have a particular tool that you truly enjoy using, but are not able to use lately due to disability. Almost anything can become an adapted tool. Below you will find some tips and tricks on how to create your own adapted tools. But don't let your imagination stop there, be creative!

## Seeding and Planting Tips

- Use a length of PVC pipe and a funnel to plant larger seeds.
- Place small seeds in a spice jar and sprinkle them onto the garden.
- Consider purchasing a special seeder, such as a Sow Easy Seed Sower.
- Put seeds into gelatin blocks and then drop them on the ground, the heat of the sun will melt the gelatin leaving the seeds behind to grow.

## Tools

- Use baseball tape wound around the handle of your tool to create a larger surface area to grip.
- Create a PVC pipe handle by heating an appropriate length and diameter piece of PVC pipe to 235 degrees in the oven **\*\*BE CAREFUL: the PVC will be hot\***. Slide the pipe onto the handle of your tool and gently squeeze to create a firm grip.
- Purchase bicycle grips and slide onto the ends of tool handles.
- Use foam pieces to enlarge the size of the handles on tools.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Service or the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1.800.995.8503.

---

This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), U. S. Department of Agriculture under special project number 2001-41590-01143 and the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research under special project number H133B980022.

University Outreach and Extension does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or status as a Vietnam-era veteran in employment or programs.

---