



Care of Garden Tools and Equipment

Ideally, tools and garden equipment should be cleaned in the fall at the end of the gardening season before storing for the winter. Sand wood handles or use a nylon pad with soap and water to clean. Let dry. Then apply boiled linseed oil to wood's surface to lubricate and preserve or paint handles. Let it dry again. Spray chipped paint surfaces as needed.

Remove dirt and vegetative clippings from tools and equipment. Use steel wool or a wire brush to remove rust from metal surfaces or soak the metal in white vinegar. Then to disinfect tools, use 10% bleach solution (mixture of 1 part bleach to nine parts water) then let dry.

Fill an old pot (large enough to hold all of your metal blade tools) or a 5-gallon bucket with dry sand. Use $\frac{3}{4}$ qt. motor oil, mineral oil, or even vegetable or olive oil in bucket of sand (sand should be damp but not soaked). Whenever you finish cleaning or using tools, knock off the biggest chunks of soil, then plunge the tool's head into the sand a few times. Brush off the sand with a coarse cloth and store the tool as usual or leave submerged in sand until next use. Keep the sandy mixture to store tools during the winter and to use throughout the next gardening season.

Shovels, metal edges of hoes, knives and blades need to be sharpened to keep them in good working condition. Put a bit of WD-40 or motor oil on the blade. Then use a mill file and follow the angle of the original bevel or a 20 degree angle. Move the file along the edge and away from your body in long even strokes to achieve a smooth but sharp edge. Place the tool in a vise to add an extra pair of hands. When done, wipe a thin coat of mineral oil (olive oil will do) on metal surfaces. Use a whetstone or oil stone to sharpen pruning tools - shears, scissors, loppers and pruners. Inspect all screws, nuts and bolts on tools, making sure they are secure.

Also, in the fall, before putting up equipment for the winter, drain and dispose of old gasoline. Let lawn mower run until all the gas is gone in the gas tank. Change oil and clean air filter.

Scrape grass from undercarriage. Change the spark plug and leave it unplugged during winter storage. Sharpen the blade.

Remove hoses from outside water sources, drain them and put them in garage or shed for winter. Outside faucets may be covered to protect from freezing. Drain sprinkler system and shut off for winter.

Organize shed and potting areas. Empty, rinse and disinfect with 10% bleach solution garden containers.

