

## GARDENING TOOLS

### Maintenance

It is fall and you are "winterizing" your garden and yard. What will you do with your gardening tools? A rhetorical question? Well, maybe - - -.

For many of us, who just barely complete our fall yard work ahead of the snow, cleaning and storing tools may not be high on our list of priorities. On the other hand, if we have invested in quality tools and we enjoy their use, there is a real need to take a little time to care for them and store them properly.

#### HAND TOOLS:

Clean them. Don't store them with mud or other debris caked on the blades. There is a tendency for rust and corrosion to occur under the dirt. When the metal surfaces are clean and dry, put them where the metal will warm (to open the pores). Spray with WD-40. Allow a few hours for it to penetrate the metal. Wipe off any excess. Be careful not to get the WD-40 on wood handles (it softens the wood) or on nuts and bolts which hold parts of the tool together (it is an excellent penetrant and will loosen them). Remember that this product is a good rust inhibitor and an excellent penetrant, it is not a durable lubricant. For lubricating purposes you are far better off with a suitable oil, grease or synthetic product.

Clean the handles as well. Use a little sandpaper on wood handled tools if they need it. After sanding, rub in a little linseed or tung oil.

Sharpen the cutting edges. This can be done on a bench grinder if one is available. If not a flat (mill) file will work with most tools. There is also a tool called a "Super Sharpener No. 96" out there that is supposed to work wonders on garden tools. It is available from places such as Home Depot (though not from Eagle, the last time I checked).

Store your tools out of the weather, in a dry area. If possible, store larger tools by hanging from their heads. This will prevent such things as having them wind up sitting with their heads in pool of water from melted snow. Small hand tools should go into tool boxes or drawers. (You do want to find them next spring.)

Power driven tools such as lawn mowers, rototillers and chain saws should also be cleaned thoroughly of dirt, oil, grass, sawdust, etc. It is a good time to sharpen their cutting edges also. The engines should be winterized per the manufacturers instructions. This usually involves draining the gas tank and running the engine dry. However, different companies vary in the specifics recommended for their products. Do not keep unused gasoline over winter. Start with fresh fuel in the spring.

Give your garden tools a little of your time and attention this fall. Next spring, when you are ready to go, so will they!

