

How to Care for Garden Tools

Better Homes & Gardens

June 09, 2015

Properly caring for your tools will ensure that you enjoy gardening with them for many seasons to come.

After the last leaf is raked and the final bulb is planted, it's time to settle your tools in for a long winter nap. To keep your tool blades sparkly and free of dust during hibernation, all you'll need is a little sand and oil. Follow these three easy steps to ensure your treasured tools will be in great shape for another season working the soil.

Instructions:

1. **Fill an old pot or bucket** (large enough to hold all of your metal-blade tools) with dry sand. Mix lubricating oil such as WD-40 or vegetable oil with the sand until it is thoroughly moist. Gather your tools and use a putty knife or steel-wool scrubbing pad to remove large clumps of caked mud from the blades.



2. **Plunge your hoes**, shovels, trowels, forks, and metal dibblers into the sandy mix. Place the pot or bucket containing the tools in a cool, dry place for winter storage and let the mix do its work. Keep wooden tool handles from splitting and drying out during the winter months by rubbing them with linseed oil before storage.



3. **When spring rolls around**, remove the tools from the mixture and wipe down the blades with a piece of burlap or coarse cloth. If you don't want to overwinter your tools, you can just plunge them into the mixture several times to remove debris in the fall and then polish with a coarse cloth and hang for storage. Keep the sandy mixture for use anytime you want to spruce up your tools.

