

## Quality Hand Tools for Better Gardening

by Rita Pelczar

**F**OR ANY gardening activity that involves detailed effort, quality hand tools make the job easier. Here are a few of my favorites.

Transplanting seedlings into the garden is best done with sharp-pointed trowels such as the stainless steel trowels from Lee Valley ([www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)). The **10-Inch Spear Point SS Trowel** cuts through heavy soil with its long, sharp tip. The narrow-bladed **12-Inch Transplant SS Trowel** can dig a bit deeper. Both are marked in imperial and metric increments to help with accurate depth and spacing when planting.

Also from Lee Valley is the **Transplant Knife**, ideal for dividing houseplants or perennials. The thin, stainless steel blade flexes, so you can slide it along the inner wall of a container to loosen a plant from its pot. For dividing plants, the five-and-one-half-inch serrated blade makes cuts through roots cleanly.

A good choice for cutting down annual weeds is the 17-inch-long **Mini Hula Hoe** from Planet Natural ([www.planetnatural.com](http://www.planetnatural.com)). This short-handled version of the original Hula Hoe is the perfect length to use for cultivating raised beds. Both edges of the stirrup-shaped blade are sharp, so weeds are cut off at ground level as you move the hoe back and forth.

Also from Planet Natural is a short-handled cultivating tool called the **3-Tined Rake**. It has excellent balance and significant heft that comes



Transplant Knife

in handy for breaking up clumps of soil, cultivating along a row of vegetables, or digging up deep-rooted weeds.

The **Convertible Pruner + Lopper** from Corona ([www.coronatoolsusa.com](http://www.coronatoolsusa.com)) combines two tools in one package, which is handy when you need to cut branches a bit larger than expected. The forged steel bypass pruners have an internal spring, and the handles fold down easily for additional leverage, morphing the hand pruners into loppers for two-handed operation. It cuts through branches up to one-and-one-quarter inches in diameter.

For larger jobs, Corona's **ComfortGEL+™ Extendable Bypass Lopper** cuts branches to one-and-three-quarter inches with ease. It has comfortable grips and the handles extend to 29 inches and lock in place. The blades



ComfortGEL+™ Extendable Bypass Lopper, top, and Convertible Pruner + Lopper, bottom

are coated with a material that prevents sticking.

A new tool from Fiskars ([www2.fiskars.com](http://www2.fiskars.com)) called a **Billhook Saw** is great for removing tough weedy roots and vines. The nine-inch, rust-resistant blade has a curved tip, or hook, for both pulling and cutting. The opposite side of the blade features a toothed edge that functions as a coarse saw for severing fibrous or woody branches. The contoured handle allows you to

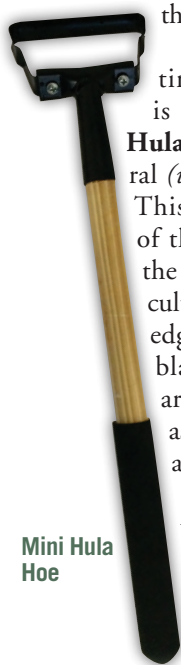
hold it in different positions to suit the job at hand. A smaller, six-inch Billhook blade is also available.

With Fiskars **Garden Bucket Caddy**, you'll have all your hand tools available when you need them. Wrap the canvas



caddy around any five-gallon bucket, secure it in place with its velcro tab, and use the pouches to stash your tools, gloves, seed packages, water bottle, bug repellent, and other small items. Carry plants, collect weeds, or gather harvested vegetables in the bucket.

Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.



Mini Hula Hoe