

A Rake for Every Reason

by Rita Pelczar



Groundskeeper II Rake



Wizard Rake

AT THIS TIME of year, autumn leaves are beginning to add their brilliant colors to my North Carolina garden. This seasonal display is always a joy to behold, but it is also a reminder that I'll be needing a rake before long. There are other uses for rakes besides leaf collection, of course—from grading a new bed to spreading mulch or gravel and leveling soil to sow grass seed. And there are different types of rakes suited to each job. The following are a few that have come in handy around my garden.

The **Groundskeeper II Rake** from Gardener's Edge (www.gardenersedge.com) is a sturdy, lightweight option for both raking leaves and spreading mulch. The wire tines are very flexible because each one is spring-loaded and connected individually to the head. This is particularly useful on uneven ground—for example, when removing leaves from drainage culverts. The 55-inch fiberglass handle is available with either a nine-inch head—good for narrow spaces—or a 21-inch head for covering larger areas.

When leaves collect on patios, decks, or stone paths, a traditional leaf rake can leave damaging marks or deeply disturb gravel. English toolmaker Bulldog offers two good choices with flexible rubber tines for these surfaces. The **Wizard Rake** has a 20-inch-wide rubber tine head that is a cross between a rake and a broom; it's also handy for raking up grass clippings or wet, matted leaves. The **Merlin Rake** has a smaller, 10-inch head, good for tighter spaces such as the steps of a deck. Both come with a 54-inch ash handle and are available from Clarington Forge (www.claringtonforge.com).

Made in Germany, the **WOLF-Garten® Adjustable Garden & Shrub Rake** from BlueStone Garden (www.bluestonegarden.com) allows you to adjust the width of your rake—from 14 to 22 inches—with



WOLF-Garten Adjustable Garden & Shrub Rake

a simple sliding mechanism. The narrow width works well to remove debris between shrubs; widen the head for raking leaves in the lawn. The sturdy steel tines make the rake a bit heavy, but it's a good choice for handling tough jobs. Handles—either wooden or lightweight aluminum—are sold separately; the head snaps easily and securely into the shaft. This rake comes with a 10-year warranty.



Leaf Claws

To make shorter work of gathering raked leaves to deposit in a bag or a cart, Gardener's Edge offers **Leaf Claws**. Each of these oversized plastic claws have a hand grip for you to hold onto and a semi-circular forearm support for steadiness. With an overall length of 26 inches and width of 19 inches, the claws extend your reach—significantly increasing the quantity of leaves you can collect at one time and reducing the amount of bending you have to do. They are also useful for picking up grass or hedge clippings. I find them handy for gathering pine needles that I use to mulch my blueberries.

The **Haxnicks Leaf Picker**, also from Gardener's Edge, is just the ticket for removing leaves from hard-to-reach spots.

It's great for cleaning out my window wells or for removing clumps of leaves that sometimes accumulate in my creek. The business end of the tool is about seven inches square and is equipped with metal spikes that collect leaves and other debris by impaling them. To clear the tool of whatever you've collected, just slide the release handle downward. The 51-inch handle provides a good reach.

Bow rakes—also called garden rakes—have short, rigid tines arranged in a straight line. While the full-size garden rake is indispensable for breaking up and leveling soil, spreading gravel or mulch, and other garden chores, the **Narrow 10-Tine Rake** by Sneeboer available from Garden Tool Company (www.gardentoolcompany.com) is my preferred rake for working the soil in the raised beds of my kitchen garden, where space is a bit tight. Handcrafted in Holland, this rake has great balance and it comes with a lifetime guarantee. The stainless steel head is nine-and-a-half inches wide and curves gently to fit onto an ash handle, providing good leverage for the closely spaced, curved tines.

The **WOLF-Garten Dethatching Roller Scarifying Rake**, from BlueStone Garden, is the perfect choice for another autumn chore: dethatching and/or reseeding your lawn. The rake's head is 12 inches wide and is equipped with 10 very sharp steel tines. A 59-inch lightweight aluminum



Haxnicks Leaf Picker

handle, sold separately, snaps securely onto the head. The wheels at either end of the head make the dethatching process some-



Narrow 10-Tine Rake



WOLF-Garten Dethatching Roller Scarifying Rake

what easier and hold the tines at the proper depth. Pull the rake toward you to remove thatch, old grass clippings, and moss from your lawn, push it away and a slight rotation of the tines releases the accumulated debris. The rake comes with a 10-year warranty.

So enjoy the cooler temperatures of autumn as you tidy up your beds and lawn. Using the right tool for the job makes each chore easier.

Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.