

## Multi-Tasking Hand Tools

by Rita Pelczar

**W**HEN I head to the garden, I usually take just a couple of tools with me, so they need to be able to perform a variety of tasks and they have to feel comfortable in my hands when I use them. Here are a few that fit the bill.

I've long been a fan of a handcrafted tool from Lewiston, Idaho, with the odd name of **Hoe-dag** (available from Hoss Tools ([www.hosstools.com](http://www.hosstools.com))). It's a well-balanced, short-handled hoe featur-



**Hoe-dag**

ing a tough, eight-inch-long, carbon-steel blade with both narrow and broad ends attached to a 15-inch-long, seasoned beech shaft. I use the narrow end to grub out roots of tough weeds—it has enough heft to dig deep but is not so heavy to be awkward or tiring. The same end works well for digging holes for seedlings or making seed furrows. The wide end is an excellent cultivating tool.



**2-Tine Cultivator Hand Eye Hoe**

Crafted in Germany, the **2-Tine Cultivator Hand Eye Hoe**, available from Garden Tool Company ([www.gardentoolcompany.com](http://www.gardentoolcompany.com)), is another well-balanced hand hoe. Its sturdy ash handle fits snugly through the eye of the carbon steel blade. One side of the head is a two-and-a-half-inch-wide blade—good for digging or weeding. To break up soil clods or pry out stones, flip the tool to the other side, which is a two-tine fork. With an overall length of about 16 inches and a weight of just one pound, it's a tool you can carry around with ease.

My husband's go-to tool for weeding is the **Multi-Purpose Hori-Hori Knife** from Gardener's Edge ([www.gardenersedge.com](http://www.gardenersedge.com)).

Besides extracting weeds by their roots, it's great for digging holes for transplants or bulbs; and it cuts through anything from twine to the roots of perennials that you want to divide. The six-and-three-quarter-inch, hardened stainless steel blade is serrated and engraved with millimeter depth measurements to help ensure accurate



**Multi-Purpose Hori-Hori Knife**

planting. Its vinyl carrier has a loop that can be attached to a belt to keep it safely sheathed until ready for use.

The 10-and-a-half-inch-long **Handy Weeder Tool**, also from Gardener's Edge, is small and light enough to carry on your belt. The five-inch-long, flat beveled blade is handy for weeding in tight places—between young vegetables or flowers, even in planters—easily cutting young weeds at their roots without disturbing nearby plants. It also makes precise furrows for sowing seeds.



**Handy Weeder Tool**



**Dirty Little Digger**

With its scooped, stainless steel blade, the **Dirty Little Digger** from Gardener's Supply Company ([www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com)) is terrific for precise planting. Its sharp point facilitates digging around obstacles, making it easier to tuck young plants into an existing bed or container without disturbing the surrounding soil or plants, or plant bulbs under a tree; it has etched depth measurements from one to four inches on the blade. It can also be used for digging up or cutting through weeds.

The **Short-Handled Ho-Mi Digger** from Lee Valley Tools ([www.leevalley.com](http://www.leevalley.com)),



**Short-Handled Ho-Mi Digger**

with its hand-forged steel blade and curved, plowshare design, is both heavy-duty and versatile. Use it to dig holes for transplants or furrows for seeds, thin seedlings, or remove weeds. Its six-and-a-half-inch blade is heavier than those of many similar tools, so it has real grubbing power. A long-handled 63-inch version is also available.

Lee Valley's **Folding Sickle** makes short work of vegetable garden clean-up, clearing large areas of herbaceous weeds, or cutting back ornamental grasses. The seven-inch-long, curved metal blade folds and locks for easy and safe carrying or storage. The 16-inch-long metal handle has a cushioned, rubber grip.



**Folding Sickle**

A similarly useful tool from Gardener's Edge is the **A.M. Leonard Wavy Edge Stainless Steel Cut-All Knife**. Its 13-inch serrated stainless steel blade cuts through sod, weeds, garden twine, and ornamental grasses. It also comes in handy for cutting through root balls when dividing perennials—the serrated edge slices through thick daylily roots without a problem. The composite handle is weatherproof and the tool comes with a lifetime warranty.

I like to have a pair of pruners with me whenever I go out to garden, and I usually grab the **Ratchet Pruner** from Gardener's Supply Company. Lightweight yet providing significant cutting strength, the



**Wavy Edge Stainless Steel Cut-All Knife**

eight-inch tool features steel blades and aluminum handles. The wide finger opening has a molded curve for your forefinger for stabilizing the tool while you're using it, and the ratchet action offers more cutting power for less effort. It is useful for harvesting vegetables and cutting or deadheading flowers.



**Ratchet Pruner**

With a maximum opening of an inch, you can also use it to prune roses, grapes, bramble fruits, and smaller ornamental shrubs.

These are tools that you will reach for frequently, for a variety of tasks, as you tend your garden. Maybe one will become your new favorite.

*Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.*