

Pruning Tools for Every Task

by Rita Pelczar

PRUNING IS a necessary task in any garden. From bigger jobs like removing dead, weak, unhealthy, or crossing branches to more delicate cuts that encourage flowering and fruiting, a well-sharpened, properly-sized, task-appropriate pruning tool is essential. Here are a few that I depend upon.

The **Softgrip® Micro-Tip® Pruning Snip** from Fiskars (www.fiskars.com) is made for precise tasks such as pruning

houseplants or sculpting bonsai. I use it to cut back stem tips of herbaceous plants to encourage lateral branching. It's only six inches long, so you can reach into small spaces to make accurate cuts. Its comfortable grip and gentle spring-action opening have earned it the Arthritis Foundation's Ease of UseSM Commendation.

If you grow your own cut flowers, you may want to get a pair of the **Stainless Precision Pruning Snips** from

Gardener's Supply Company (www.gardeners.com). Great for snipping fresh bouquets as well as deadheading spent blooms, they are also strong enough to cut thick rose stems. Made of stainless steel with a brass lock, they are as handsome as they are useful. At seven-and-a-half inches long, they are well-suited for smaller hands.

Felco has a number of high-quality, general-purpose hand pruners. Made in



Left: Fiskars Pruning Stik® Tree Pruner. Top: Fiskars Softgrip® Micro-Tip® Pruning Snip. Above: Stainless Precision Pruning Snips.



Top left: Felco 6 Pruner, left, and Felco 2 Pruner, right. Top right: Silky Zubat Pruning Saw. Bottom left: Fiskars 27-Inch Ratchet Lopper.



cuts through branches of up to two inches in diameter. The ratchet design reduces the effort required to make such large cuts. The anvil-style ground steel blades have a coating that reduces friction and rust. For pruning live branches of up to two inches in diameter, **Fiskars Power-Gearz™** pruners offer a similar ratchet design with bypass blades.

A good saw is essential for pruning larger branches. Folding handsaws are convenient to tote around, but for landscape professionals and gardeners who do a lot of pruning, the **Silky Zubat Pruning Saw**, available from A. M. Leonard (www.amleo.com), is a cut above. “The Zubat is a heck of a saw,” says Dan Scott, associate director of gardens and facilities at the American Horticultural Society’s River Farm headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. “Most folks never go back to what they were using once they try one.” The 13-inch, curved blade has about six teeth per inch, which means it can sever a large branch with minimal effort. The molded rubber handle has a comfortable grip, and the blade extends into the handle for extra strength and stability. The saw comes with a protective scabbard.

Switzerland, various models are available from both Gardener’s Supply Company and Gardener’s Edge (www.gardenersedge.com). For example, the **Felco® 2 Pruner** is sized for larger hands and can cut branches of up to an inch in diameter; the **6 Pruner**, designed to fit smaller hands, has a slightly smaller maximum cutting capacity. Both

bypass pruners have hardened steel blades and cushioned, plastic-coated, aluminum alloy handles. They are lightweight, easily sharpened, and can be disassembled for cleaning or repair.



Corona® FlexDIAL® ComfortGEL® Bypass Pruner

Corona®, based in California, also has a wide selection of sturdy hand pruners (www.coronatoolsusa.com). Several models have adjustable features to increase their ease of use and minimize strain on the hands, such as its new **FlexDIAL® ComfortGEL® Bypass Pruner**. The dial can be set between 1 for smaller hands and 8 for larger hands, controlling how wide the blades will open. This helps reduce fatigue when performing repetitive pruning. Cushioned, ergonomic grips and specially coated blades also help to make all sorts of pruning tasks feel almost effortless.

Loppers are designed to cut larger branches and come in many sizes. The **Fiskars 27-Inch Ratchet Lopper** easily

Pole pruners are needed to trim branches that can’t be reached with loppers or hand saws. The **Fiskars Pruning Stik® Tree Pruner** is a lightweight aluminum option without ropes; just slide the handle to work the cutting head, which can be rotated to make angled cuts. It is five feet long and cuts branches up to one-and-a-quarter-inches in diameter.

For higher and/or larger branches, the **Fiskars Chain Drive Extendable Pole Saw & Pruner** can be adjusted from seven to 16 feet. Its business end is equipped with a precision-ground steel pruner, which operates smoothly by pulling the rope. Its 15-inch saw has a hooked end that helps anchor it on the target branch to prevent slipping.

Whatever you need to prune, these tools, properly maintained, are up to the task. 🌿

Rita Pelczar is a contributing editor for The American Gardener.