

A Gardener is Only as Sharp As His Tools
by Carolyn Meiers

Yard work is hard enough. Don't let dull tools make it any more difficult. Hedge trimmers, scissors, grass clippers, mowers, knives, chain saws, hand saws, loppers, and pruning shears are just a few of the gardening tools that work better with a sharp edge.

A professional can do the job or you may decide to do it yourself. The cost of sharpening most hand tools is less than \$5, and once a year is quite adequate, depending on usage. The best time of the year is late fall, after the gardening is done. The tools won't lose their edge, and they'll be ready for the first jobs of spring. Missed the fall? Jump in and get it done any time of year!

If you decide to sharpen your own at home, be careful! A longer file reduces the chance of accidental cuts, but it is easy to slice your hand with one missed pass on the file. Power grinders are not for the novice, and can damage the cutting edge if used improperly. Using a file, make several passes with the file away from the blunt end to improve sharpness. How many passes depends, but the average is 10 passes.

Any tools used to cut grass need more attention because wet grass will quickly dull a blade. Shears and mowers are obvious tools that need an edge, but plenty of other gardening tools would work better if exposed to the sharpening file. A shovel is a good example. Give it an edge by filing to the top inside edge. Guide the file in a direction away from the handle. Hoes and tools used to turn soil also need sharp edges. File them on the edge that faces you. Again, work away from the handle.

A sharp edge will give you a head start in gardening success throughout the summer.