

HYGIENE OF GARDEN TOOLS

MAINTENANCE OF GARDEN TOOLS AT THE END OF THE SEASON

Numerous manual or motorised tools transport earth, leaves, seeds, pollen, arthropods and plant exudates from the place where they were used to another. Many living antagonists of crops can be disseminated by these means. Most of the time this dissemination is without consequences because of the banal character of these antagonists. However, it is prudent to apply simple cleaning or disinfection measures to the different tools to prevent the spreading of bio-aggressors.

Take advantage of the winter break to make an inventory of the maintenance work to be done on your tools and at the same time carry out the cleaning of your garden shed.

How to proceed?

Tools should be classified according to their category. This is more convenient and so you do not get confused with maintenance products and equipment.



Hand tools

Usually they are equipped with a handle that requires special attention. Already when buying them, it is wise to prefer solid and flexible sleeves in beech or ash wood. The wearing of the sleeves often occurs at the fasteners: tighten the screws or change them.

Sometimes it is enough to soak the sleeves in water for one night, so that the wood swells and thus prevents the tool from moving.

A careful washing will remove dry earth. Then a light sanding with sandpaper followed by a coating with paraffin or linseed oil will protect the wood. Some tool makers opt for synthetic sleeves. If these gain in strength they, however, facilitate the formation of blisters on your hands. This material does not absorb transpiration.

For the spade, the fork, and all the tools used to work the ground, the cleaning of the metal part begins with a wire brush to evacuate the dry earth, followed by an application of draining oil or white vinegar. The material will thus be protected from rust.

Cutting tools

Such as tree-trimmers, shears or secateurs.

The maintenance of the blades is done with rubbing alcohol, you shoot two birds with one arrow, you get rid of the resin of the blades and the alcohol plays a role of disinfection agent). The sharpening of the blades may be necessary. To restore the edges, it will be necessary to use a file.

Don't forget to grease the axels and the spring with Vaseline or consistent fat.

Motor tools

Before you start maintenance, carefully read the instructions of your lawn movers or other trimmers. Basic precaution before any intervention: unplug the power tools and remove the spark plugs for the thermal equipment. Empty the engines, empty the tanks, grease the axels and sharpen the blades. Note: an excessively damaged blade reduces the performance of the machine. The knives of the plant grinders have to be regularly sharpened.

Pots, buckets and stakes

Start with an energetic brushing to remove all soil leftovers. Then pass with a sponge soaked in bleach (bactericidal) and rinse thoroughly. The wooden stakes are quickly damaged. Remove most of the earth by scrapping with a knife and immerse them in a container filled with a mixture of water and bleach. After drying, an application with a "bouillie bordelaise" (A fungicide prepared with a copper and chalk mixture) will complete the operation. You can also use rubbing alcohol for your metal stakes. Do not forget your seed boxes, the wheelbarrow and the planks you place between the rows. The wood is an excellent refuge for insect larvae.

The sprayer does not make an exception to the rule

Never store a sprayer containing a preparation residue: the preparation quickly loses its properties and it is likely to damage the device (corrosion, clogging). After each use, rinse with clear water and use a light pressure to clean the lance. The joints dry out: lubricate them occasionally with grease or vaseline.

The watering equipment

This equipment has to be placed, so that it cannot be affected by frost (pumps, programmers, ducts, pipes). The latter will be emptied from its contents and placed at height so that it empties itself.

Last step: The storage

Finally, and so that your efforts will not be in vain, store your tools in a dry place. The ideal is to hang them on a wall (to evacuate the humidity) the metal part at height and taking care to place the sharp parts as much as possible facing the wall.

Tips, tricks and advice

- Here is an easy trick to **sharpen and to protect** a tool while cleaning it. Just fill a bucket of sand and add 500 ml of vegetable oil; mix well and place it at the entrance of the storage room. Every time you enter, immerse the tool in the mixture: the sand will sharpen and polish while removing rust.
- Jean-Paul, French gardener emeritus, recommends the grindstone to **sharpen** the secateurs. This enables you to make a beautiful cut that will heal quickly and prevent the installation of diseases. Disinfection with rubbing alcohol is required after each use.
- **White vinegar**, a very effective product to remove rust is above all very ecological.
- **Protect your hands**: push the tip of the tools into an old tennis ball. Insert the saw blade into a garden hose cut lengthwise.
- Before using **electric devices outdoors**, make sure that the grass is not wet, that the connections are in good condition, that the wire is not damaged and does not drag in a puddle of water.
- Cleaning of the **gardening gloves**: put on the gloves and rub your hands with water and a detergent, rinse; when they are dry put them in their place.
- Get rid of **rags** soaked in oil and gasoline; they could catch fire; bring them with the remains of pesticides, stored in a suitable and sealed container, to the waste service.
- A simple rule to be applied in the garden is to start the work in areas **that are a priori not contaminated and finishing the task in the zone that is supposedly infected**.
- Remove squatters (reds, mice) from your shed with **traps** (available in garden centres).
- Eliminate everything that is bulky around the shelter to **restore its good looks**.

