

## Your First Tool – Knowledge!

### And the other tools...

My favorite is an 18-inch weeder with teeth on one side and a short blade on the other that is good for yanking out clumps of weeds and digging small planting holes. It is not good for tight spots. I spent a lot of time coaxing weeds out of the cracks in the driveway paving thinking while I worked that the tool, 'angled weeder' needed to be thinner and have a hook on the end. It was helpful but too thick for most of the cracks between the concrete and wood strips. Weeding of any kind gives you time to think, or just zone out. I tried to recall a few lines of "The glory of the Garden" by Rudyard Kipling, he of 'Gunga Din' imperialism: "Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made / By singing: "Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade, / While better men than we go out and start their working lives / At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives."

Just that scrap will tell you how much fun it was for 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys to learn Kipling's "If-" I expect they moaned and groaned at the time but I also expect they still hear echoes of "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs / And blaming it on you..."

Back to tools... One of the cleverest ones I've seen is the truffle spade used by Master Gardener Judy Doyel. It is a short pole with a vee shaped blade sharpened on both sides of the vee. Judy got hers at Brent and Beck's Bulbs and finds it indispensable.

When asked about favorite tools, Mary Simpson said Fiskars 'Big Grip' a garden knife with teeth on one side and a pronged tip. Mary's husband, George, has a favorite tool – his computer! Ruth White also likes the garden knife and is enthusiastic about her racking lopper. That racket mechanism means that you will not have to brace one arm of the lopper against something while you pull the other arm with both hands.

Nancy Fuchs, artist and garden writer, favors a short mattock. It is heavy enough to really do the job and Nancy advises "Paint your tools!" We know tools tend to get away from us so the brighter the color the easier to find.

Some gardeners have stand-up tools they can't spare. Betty Durette has a long hoe with a triangular blade, sharp on one side, toothed on the other. Betty saw it at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond and knew she had to have it. Another favorite hoe is Carolyn Evans' shuffle hoe with a circle instead of a blade. It is good for weeding among young plantings you don't want to harm.

Sally Moore favors an adjustable rake. This tool can be narrowed to poke between close shrubs for a cleanup. We all know how frustrating it is to wield a wide rake into a narrow space! When Jan Price was asked which was her greatest garden aid, she quipped, "My husband, Dick!" Lucky lady.

Whatever tool you prefer, it needs to be sharp! A sharpening stone works well for keeping an edge on those tools needing to be sharp. New blades are available for your treasured hand pruners. Good tools are not inexpensive, but then cheap tools aren't cheap either as you have to buy them over and over.