

# Refreshing Neglected Garden Tools by Gardenista Team

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Some of us at Gardenista are guilty of being a little careless with our garden tools; we've left them out to soak in the rain, scorch in the sun, and decay in buckets of weeds. We love our tools but they're ill cared for because, frankly, making a mess is more fun than cleaning one up.

But over time, some of our tools have started to show signs of abuse, and we're not enthused about spending money on new ones. Dirty garden tools also can spread disease in the yard. We fight hard enough to keep our plants alive under the best of conditions—the last thing we need is to make them sick.

Gardenista contributor Cynthia did a little research on garden tool cleaning and care and showed us how to get our tools gleaming again using basic household cleaners.

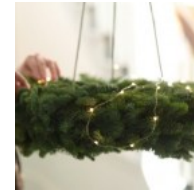
Photography by [Liesa Johannssen](http://www.liesa-johannssen.com) (<http://www.liesa-johannssen.com>).

## Materials

- Dishwashing detergent
- Baking soda
- 80-grit sandpaper, for especially rusty tools
- Steel wool
- Alcohol or another disinfectant (a 10-percent bleach and water solution works well, too)
- Coconut oil
- Paper towels
- Optional: Canola or linseed oil, for storage

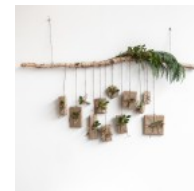
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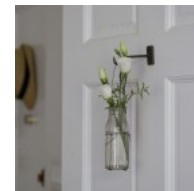
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Above: First, Cynthia rinsed the excess dirt off her tools and gave them a good soak in warm water with a touch of detergent. She then scrubbed them with baking soda and already, some of her tools were shining. Others needed more work.



Above: Cynthia's rust-laden saw-toothed sickle required more than just baking soda: 80-grit sandpaper did the trick on the body of the sickle, and steel wool and baking soda worked well on the fine teeth.

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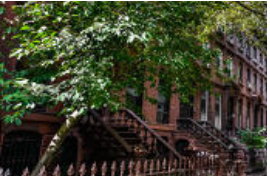
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Above: Cynthia then rubbed the metal with alcohol, drying and disinfecting her tools at the same time.



Above: Cynthia was especially careful to disinfect the blades of her pruners.



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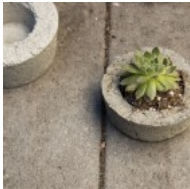
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Above: The wood handles were dried out and embedded with dirt, so Cynthia knew she wouldn't be able to make them perfect. But she could extend their lives significantly by cleaning the handles well with steel wool, then rubbing with coconut oil to rejuvenate the wood and keep further drying at bay.

## Finished Product





Above: Almost as good as new. Cynthia oiled the business ends of her tools with canola or linseed oil before storing them, as an extra precaution against rust.

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