

NEWS RELEASE

Gregg Eyestone  
110 Courthouse Plaza  
Manhattan, KS 66502-0111

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Phone: 785-537-6350  
FAX: 785-537-6353

Preparing Gardening Tools

A favorite garden tool of mine is my grandfather's garden fork. It came with a long handle. Recently, I found a garden fork that is missing a handle. I am in the process of getting a D-handle to attach to the fork.

Now it is a beneficial use of time to get tools ready for action. Cleaning and sharpening tools is not too hard. It does require some time and effort. K-State Extension have some available resources on tool maintenance. Available on-line is the publication "How to Clean and Sharpen Garden Tools" which can be downloaded. A couple of videos are available. One on sharpening your lawn mower blade and one on cleaning tools. They can be found on the Kansas Healthy Yards website.

Prepare a tool for sharpening by first making sure it is clean. Clean the tool with warm soapy water to remove all debris with a scouring pad. Mineral spirits may be necessary to remove any plant sap. The use of a wire brush along with steel wool removes rust. After sharpening, apply a lubricant and wipe with a clean rag.

The use of a file is a common sharpening tool. Hold the file at the same angle as the beveled cutting edge. This is usually 10 to 20 degrees. File from the center of the blade to the edge following the shape of the blade. Use moderate pressure. This may only require 10 to 20 strokes for maintenance. Very dull tools may require up to 40 to 50 strokes.

Wooden-handled tools require care for longevity. Moisture gets into the wood and causes splitting and splintering. Sand the handle lightly until smooth and coat it with linseed oil. This will seal the handle from moisture. Doing this once a year or more is suggested.

Sharpening tools take some practice. It may sound more like work than gardening fun. Fortunately, there are businesses that will sharpen tools for you. Check with your hardware store or handyperson service.

If you have any questions on any horticulture topic, please contact Gregg Eyestone at the Riley County office of K-State Extension. Gregg may be contacted by calling 537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: [geyeston@ksu.edu](mailto:geyeston@ksu.edu)

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