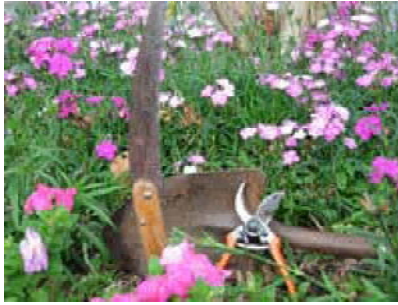


## Take Care of Your Gardening Tools



*Jim Kirschke is a Master Gardener Volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>*

**G**ardening would be impossible without proper tools. The right tools will make your work much easier but a substantial investment. For these reasons gardeners should take good care of their tools.

The first thing to consider is proper storage. Tools left out in the weather will deteriorate quickly and can become will rust, wooden handles will deteriorate and moving parts will bind. So be sure you have a clean dry place in v your tools. Fuel should be drained from any power equipment that will be stored for an extended period. This wil expensive repair bill.

Tools should be cleaned immediately after use. Remove any soil from your digging or cultivating tools by either brushing. If you do wash your tools be sure they are dry before you put them away. Pruning tools should be care any residual material like sap or wood dust. A little oil will do a lot to retard rust and keep any moving parts wor you have been using the tools on any diseased plants you should wipe them down with some alcohol before usin healthy plants. In fact it is recommended that when pruning you keep some alcohol handy to wipe the blades betv avoid spreading disease.

Always check tool blades for sharpness before using. They will require less effort to use, do less damage to plant knives, are safer to use. Try cutting through turf grass with a dull spade and you will understand this precaution. file handy for sharpening the blades of shovels, hoes and other digging and cultivating tools. For fine cutting bla shears a sharpening stone is recommended.

Always check power tools before using. Make sure you are using the right fuel mixture. Failure to do this will res failure. Remember to keep the moving parts lubricated and any oil reservoirs filled. Watch out for loose parts. Ch blades regularly for sharpness and balance. Keep the underside of the mower deck clean. The same practice shou tillers. If you are using a chain saw be sure the chain has been sharpened and the bar oil reservoir has been filled. dull chain is dangerous. Always wear gloves and eye protection and avoid loose clothing. Make sure the working are disengaged before starting the engine.

If you are working with electrically driven equipment carefully check the condition of the power cord. Do not use if the cord shows signs of damage. Never use electrical equipment in wet or damp areas. Be aware of where the before you start working. Many bad accidents have occurred due to accidentally cutting through the power cord.

A good habit is to clean and inspect your tools both before and after use. Clean, well maintained tools will be safer to use, will make gardening time much more pleasant and will save you money.

## Take Care of Your Gardening Tool

###