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SELECTING GARDENING EQUIPMENT

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The gardening equipment depends on the size of your garden, your age, and strength, and whether you want to get the job done in a hurry or prefer to take your time. The minimum equipment would be a shovel or spade, hoe, rake, and trowel. There is a wide selection of styles available in each of these tools and the choice is really one of a personal preference.

A garden shovel with a short handle and pointed blade is lighter and smaller than most other shovels and therefore, is well suited to use in the garden. The square spade does a neat, straight job and is particularly popular for edging and cultivating. However, if you have a large expanse of garden to break and turn, the long-handled, round-pointed spade penetrates the ground more easily and requires less stooping.

A spading fork is especially useful for breaking and turning the soil. It is also useful for spreading mulches and turning compost.

A hoe is essential to any garden to prepare the seed bed, to remove weeds, and to break up encrusted soil. A number of different styles of hoes are available. The pointed-hoe with the heart-shaped blade is lightweight and useful for opening seed furrows and cultivating between plants. The Dutch or scuffle hoe has a double blade

set parallel to the ground. Pushing and pulling it just under the soil surface eliminates the newly emerging weeds and breaks up any crust on the soil surface. Probably the most commonly used hoe is the square-bladed filed hoe which lends itself well to most garden jobs.

A sturdy rake is useful in clearing the garden of rocks, pieces of wood, or other debris. It is also helpful in spreading mulches.

Especially in the spring, a trowel will be in constant use for those many jobs that cannot be done with full-sized tools.

In a larger garden, a wheel cultivator or wheel hoe may be a good investment. It has a number of attachments for soil preparation and weed control.

When you purchase tools, buy quality not quantity. Your tools will be in frequent use throughout the spring and summer. Cheap tools do not do as good a job and will not last as long. Metal parts should be of steel which will outlast alloy, stay sharp, and not bend.

Tools should be lightweight for easier handling. However, heavier tools may last longer and do a better job. Tools should be kept clean to prevent rusting. Regular sharpening will make them easier to use.

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