



Harvesting Tools

No more harvesting the hard way! These inventive harvesting tools can make this trying time a bit easier.

By John & Sue Weaver

Pike's Original Maine Garden Hod

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Having the right set of tools sometimes makes the difference between an enjoyable interlude in the garden or orchard and sweaty hours of backbreaking labor. The proper tools make bringing in the harvest easier, faster and simply more fun. Here are some items to consider to help you get the job done.

Garden Scissors

If you, like me, harvest your own herbs, garden scissors could be your new best friend. Also known as flower shears, most garden scissors feature narrow, sharply pointed anvil blades that make snipping between tight stems a breeze. Things to look for include comfortable handles (soft plastics are especially easy on the hands) and durable, stay-sharp stainless-steel blades.

Joyce Chen Unlimited Garden Scissors are typical of this breed. They feature soft-grip handles; tapered points for precision cutting; and finely honed blades of chrome molybdenum stainless steel. Their design makes them ideal for either right- or left-handed use and many retail outlets stock them.

Fiskars markets a slightly different, but-just-as-efficient, design. Fiskars Garden Shears have extra-sharp, serrated, hardened stainless steel blades that grip and hold plant material for clean cuts; comfortable, ergo-dynamic handles; and come with a lifetime warranty!

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The Harvester's Helpers

Agri-Fab
www.agri-fab.com
800-448-9282

Ames True Temper
www.ames.com
800-833-3068

Carts Vermont
www.cartsvermont.com
800-732-7417



Fiskars
www.fiskars.com
800-500-4849

Joyce Chen
www.joycechen.com
812-238-5000

Ladder King
www.ladderking.com
888-875-6477

Maine Garden Products www.mainegarden.com
877-764-9365

Nut Wizard
www.nutwizard.com
888-321-9445

Rubbermaid
www.rubbermaid.com
800-867-6763

Scythe Supply
www.scythesupply.com
207-853-4750

Spear & Jackson
www.spear-and-jackson.com
0114 281 4242 (England)

Tallman Ladders
www.tallmanladders.com
800-354-2733

Twister Picker
858-485-8670
Marketed through outlets such as Amazon.com and Builders Square

Wolf-Garten
www.wolf-garten.com
763-746-7830 in the USA
800-REDGATE

Digging Tools

You'll never appreciate a precision digging tool more than you do at harvest time—especially the classic Spear and Jackson County Trowel for hand-digging bulbs and roots. Skillfully crafted, perfectly balanced and ruggedly dependable, this heirloom-quality trowel has a carbon-steel head and a weatherproofed, hardwood handle for greater durability.

I once dug a large garden plot of potatoes with a pitchfork—never again! The right tool for the right job, I say after that ordeal—and that tool is a proper digging fork. Spear and Jackson make especially fine ones; their Neverbend Professional Potato Fork has extra-wide, forged carbon-steel tines specifically designed for lifting potatoes. Its entire head is epoxy-coated for improved resistance to rust and scratches; a traditional hardwood shaft completes this pretty picture.

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Garden Carry-all

You can carry goodies in from the garden and orchard in less picturesque containers, but why? Patterned after traditional



New England clam baskets, Pike's Original Maine Garden Hods, manufactured by Maine Garden Products, are a cut way above a bucket or sack. Pike's carry-alls are crafted of pine and steam-bent oak, with birch side rods and a food-grade, PVC-coated wire mesh body that makes it easy to rinse your crops right in the hod. They come in two handy sizes, the 16-quart Original Hod and the 8-quart L'il Hod in logo-branded, plain and painted models.

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Scythe

If you'd like to hand-harvest hay for your goats, horses or rabbits, here is your tool. According to Scythe Supply—one of America's leading authorities on European-style scythes—you can easily scythe enough grass over the summer to put up hay for eight to 10 goats. The trick is buying a quality scythe and learning to maintain and use it. They say the scythe isn't that difficult to master and their informative website (www.scythesupply.com) is loaded with resources to teach you how to do it.

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Nut and Dropped-fruit Harvester

Nut Wizard

If you've ever wanted to harvest dropped fruit or nuts that litter your yard each fall, but dread hours of bending over to pick them up, the Nut Wizard is the tool for you. The Nut Wizard, originally invented for harvesting pecans and walnuts, is a revolving, spring-wire cage on a handle. Capable of picking up most any object between 3/8-inch and 4 inches in diameter, the 412-foot-long, 3- to 5-pound tool (depending on the size) requires very little pressure to operate and comes in three sizes, the better to handle the precise sorts of dropped nuts and fruits in your own yard.

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Fruit Pickers

Ames Fruit Picker If you need to pick fruit from trees instead of off the ground, there are multiple tools designed to help do the trick.

An innovative design is the Twister Picker, a lightweight (8 ounces), aluminum-and-plastic picker tool designed to be mounted on a pole, such as a standard broom handle. To use it, the operator clamps the aluminum fruit holders on a single piece of fruit and twists it off by rotating the pole in her hands. Fruit is picked undamaged with this device and it almost makes fruit picking fun!

Ames' lightweight, basket-style Fruit Picker's bent-wire fingers are designed to coax apples, oranges, plums, peaches, avocados and more from trees. Its picker head comes fitted with a two-piece, wooden handle; Ames applies an enamel finish to protect the picker's wire basket from rust and corrosion, and adds a foam pad inside the basket to minimize bruising of valuable fruit.

The German company, Wolf-Garten, is known for its quality tools, among them the Wolf-Garten RG-M Fruit Picker. Its adjustable picker head's strong, nylon fingers grip each fruit without bruising it; then a concealed cutting blade near the front of the basket cuts it off the tree; finally it tumbles into the unit's soft, four-apple capacity canvas bag. The picker head is used with the buyer's choice of Wolf-Garten interchangeable Interlocken System expandable handles, sold separately; Wolf-Garten has over 50 different attachments that work with the Interlocken System.

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Orchard Ladders



Tallman LadderIf you have so much fruit that you need a ladder to pick it, don't settle for the rickety, old ladder in your garage! Household ladders aren't designed for orchard use; play it safe—buy a tool designed for the job.

Orchard ladders come in several designs, including four-legged, double-step ladders, straight ladders designed to lean against a tree and the *crème de la crème* of orchard ladders: the three-legged, traditional tripod orchard ladder.

Which-ever you choose, opt for a sturdy, lightweight, tempered aluminum ladder with each step braced for maximum security and one tall enough to do the job you have in mind (you must never stand above the third rung from the top of an orchard ladder, so plan accordingly). Keep in mind that tripod ladders are designed for use on soil or grassy surfaces only, so don't choose this style to use for any type of indoor application.

Ladder King manufactures a full line of aluminum orchard ladders, including the Ladder King 1400 Series Double Step Ladders designed for two-person use in 3- to 10-foot heights. Three-inch-wide steps with raised ribbing to prevent slippage; heavy-duty bracing to minimize twisting; strong spreader hinges to hold the ladder steady during use; and sure-grip rubber feet are all features of the line.

Tallman, a manufacturer of orchard ladders, features a tripod orchard ladder safety video at www.tallmanladders.com Tallman's elegant tripod ladders come in 4- to 16-foot lengths with slip-resistant steps and rigid steel hinges for strength and durability.

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Garden Carts

Vermont Garden Cart Model 26

I've saved my most indispensable harvest tool for last: a sturdy, easy-to-push- (or pull) and-manuever garden cart. I simply couldn't farm without one. There are scores of styles ideal for every need.

When choosing a garden cart, remember these points: Some carts push and maneuver infinitely easier than others; it's always best to try before you buy. The more you plan to use your cart, the sturdier it must be. If you'll need to maneuver the cart through a doorway or gate, measure to make certain it will fit. Combination wood and metal carts require indoor storage; metal or plastics usually weather well outside. Carts with pneumatic tires generally push easiest, but flat-free, solid tires are better for jobs like harvesting walnuts in the woods.

Rubbermaid Poly Farm CartCarts Vermont manufactures the classic, plywood "Garden Way" cart in a variety of sizes ranging from a compact, 4-cubic-foot, 200-pound-capacity Model 16 to a brawny, 13.6-cubic-foot, 400-pound-capacity Model 26 workhorse; it also builds Model 20A L, a lightweight cart of the same traditional design, but fashioned out of aluminum. Most incorporate an easy-slide panel for dumping heavy loads.

Agri-Fab offers an especially nice line of lawn and garden carts, including the 11-cubic-foot, 600-pound-capacity, low-center-of-gravity "Carry-All" Push Cart with a one-piece, rustproof poly bed; poly wheels; and flat-proof tires; it weighs just 65 pounds.

Rubbermaid makes a fleet of yard and garden carts as diverse as their 3.5-cubic-foot, 200-pound-capacity, 33-inch-wide Rubbermaid Poly Farm Cart with a one-piece body and 20-inch semi-pneumatic tires, and the 600-pound-capacity Garden Dump Cart with its patented dump feature and trademark pull handle that converts to a trailer hitch in seconds.

About the Authors



John & Sue Weaver are long-time hobby farmers based in Arkansas. These are only the tip of the iceberg; a wealth of handy tools are out there, ready to make this year's harvest memorable for the fun and easy way you brought it in.

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