



Best Management Practices: Tools of the Trade

We suggest the following tools for planting, pruning, and stewarding your trees – young or old.

Stewardship

- Five-gallon bucket, hose, or slow release watering bag (e.g., Treegator®)
- Water
- Mulch
- Flat rake/ Wire rake
- Lawn and Leaf bags
- Loppers, hand pruners, or pruning saw
- Pole pruner/ Pole saw
- Shovel, spade-tipped
- Shovel, flat
- Small hand-trowel
- Annual/ perennial plants for base of tree
- Tree fence or tree guard (if necessary)
- Tree stakes (if staking necessary)
- Webbed rope (e.g., ArborTie®) (if staking necessary)
- Contractor grade trash bags
- Broom
- Wheel barrow
- Personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves, closed-toed shoes, safety glasses, safety helmet, reflective clothing)

Pruning

- Lawn and leaf bags
- Loppers, hand pruners, or pole pruner
- Pruning saw/ Pole saw
- Personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves, closed-toed shoes, safety glasses, safety helmet, reflective clothing)

Planting

- Shovel, Flat
- Shovel, Spade-tipped
- Mattock
- Tarp (optional)
- Flat rake/Wire rake
- Knife or utility knife
- Loppers, hand pruners
- Bolt cutters
- Wheel barrow
- Mulch
- Five-gallon bucket, hose, or slow-release watering bag (e.g., Treegator®)
- Water
- Stake pounder or sledge hammer (if staking necessary)
- Tree stakes (if staking necessary)
- Webbed rope (e.g., ArborTie®) (if staking necessary)
- Personal protective equipment (e.g. gloves, closed-toed shoes, safety glasses, safety helmet, reflective clothing)

Well-maintained tools are critical to efficient tree stewardship.

Here are some tips:

1. When pruning diseased or dying twigs and branches, disinfect your cutting tools in between uses to prevent the spread of disease. Wearing gloves, carefully swipe cutting surfaces with a clean rag saturated with a solution of one part rubbing alcohol (70% isopropyl) to one part water, or use a pre-saturated alcohol swab for fine teeth.
2. Keep cutting tools sharp – you will use less effort to make safer, more effective cuts.
3. Over time, use and hard minerals in the soil can dull a spade-tipped shovel, making it harder to dig into compacted soils. Periodically, use a file to sharpen the edges of your shovel for easier digging.
4. Prevent metal tools from rusting by storing them clean and dry and out of the elements, if possible.
5. Consider establishing an informal safety policy on the use of potentially dangerous tools (e.g., mattock, cutting tools, stake pounder) to prevent physical injury to yourself or those nearby. Always remember to wear PPE, especially a helmet and eye protection, when using any of these tools.



Tree-planting at Bunker Hill Community College coordinated by The Nature Conservancy in partnership with the Boston Natural Areas Network. Alicia Carlson Photography. (2014)

Best Management Practices: Tools of the Trade

Bolt cutters	Used to cut and remove the top 2/3 of wire basket supporting new trees	
Slow-release watering bag	Provides a slow, even, continuous watering designed to maintain root moisture	
Bypass Hand Pruners	Used to prune small branches under 1 in. (2.5 cm) diameter	
Bypass Loppers	Used to prune branches typically up to 2 in. (5 cm) diameter	
Bypass Pole Pruner	Used to prune branches beyond reach, typically up to 2 in. (5 cm) diameter	
Pruning Saw (Hand or Pole)	Used to prune larger branches typically up to 4 in. (10 cm) diameter	
Mattock	Used to loosen compacted soil and break up old, dead roots	
Tree fence or tree guard	Protects sensitive bark at the base of the tree's trunk	
Tree stakes (wood)	Used to support newly-planted trees if likely to shift significantly in the soil during establishment, or to correct a severe lean	
Webbed rope (such as ArborTie®)	Secures tree to tree stakes	