



Tools For Weed Workers ~ Choices And Sources

Ken Moore ken@wildwork.org -March 2008

GLOVES

The most important tool you have is one you use most and think about least: Your hands. Take care of them. Most gloves will protect hands from cuts, stings, poison oak, and nettles. But the best ones can do much more. Gloves with rubberized palms and fabric backs will greatly increase your grip. The less strength you need to pull, the more you'll get done, and the happier you'll be doing it. They grip even when wet, breathe, and are washable; all qualities which leather gloves do not have. Atlas is a widely available brand. If I'm working among heavy thorns, I switch to heavy leather gloves with gauntlets

HAND SAWS, PRUNERS & LOPPERS A compact **folding pruning saw** is indispensable for cutting up to about 4" stem diameter size trees and shrubs. My favorite is from Lee Valley Tools, # EC650. Felco and Sandvik are also excellent brands, but they are longer, making them a bit more awkward to carry. **Anvil hand pruners** are far more practical in the field than bypass models are. They can't be ruined by twisting them in the cut as bypass models are, and they keep cutting long after bypass models become too dull to use. Lee Valley Tools # AB313 is inexpensive, but is the best cutting pruner I have found. Corona also makes an inexpensive light weight ratcheting anvil pruner that I carry on longer outings. For **Anvil Loppers**, Lee Valley has a ratcheting model with telescoping handles, #EB301, and a heavier duty compound-lever model, #EC515. Corona also makes good compound-lever anvil loppers. Corona tools are available at retail outlets, and the forestry equipment suppliers listed in the next section below. Lee Valley Tools Ltd. www.leevalley.com

PULASKIS, MC CLOUDS, BANK BLADES, BRUSH AXES, and other specialized tools.

Forestry equipment supply houses are great sources for nearly any kind of tools and equipment used in environmental work. These both offer illustrated catalogs which are also good sources of information. Forestry Suppliers, Inc. www.forestry-suppliers.com. Ben Meadows Co. www.benmeadows.com

STEM PULLERS The **Weed Wrench** was designed for pulling French broom, and is now used for just about anything it can get its jaws around. It is offered in four sizes, with stem diameter capacities from 1" to 2.5" The **Extractigator** is a newer alternative design to the Weed Wrench, with some advantages. It comes in only one size, about equivalent to the medium (2") size Weed Wrench. The Weed Wrench Co. www.weedwrench.com The Extractigator www.excsys.com/extractigator.htm

CORDLESS DRILLS

Drilling and injecting herbicide is one of the fastest and easiest ways to kill standing trees. The demand for high voltage cordless drills in the building trades has made available tools which can make this technique feasible for large scale invasive tree species control. Even small 9 or 12 volt models will suffice if you just have a few small trees to kill, but you'll need at least an 18 volt model and extra batteries if you need to drill many trees. Recently, Lithium-Ion batteries have become available on cordless drills, and they offer significantly longer run time, as well as being lighter in weight. In addition they are much more friendly to the environment than currently used NiCad batteries. Many brands are available from a wide range of sources. many possible sources; Here is one: Northwest Power Tools <http://www.northwestpowertools.com>

CLIMBING GEAR

Here is a great source for arborists gear and climbing equipment. Their catalog contains much helpful information, and has superb technical illustrations showing you how to use climbing gear. Sherrill Tree <http://www.wtsherrill.com>

EUROPEAN PATTERN SCYTHE

Unfortunately, the scythe is a tool that has acquired a bad reputation here in the U.S., because most scythes found here are the heavy and poorly designed English type. The Austrian, or European scythe, is a much more efficient and versatile tool. A variety of blades are available to cut anything from small trees to fields of grass and forbs. This is a tool which requires some practice in use and sharpening, but will pay rich dividends. This tool can make mowing an almost zen-like experience! Versions are available from a few sources in the U.S., but here is one unique source in Canada which will provide not only the best quality scythes and tools, but will tailor them to your specific needs and offer a wealth of invaluable help and knowledge on every aspect of this amazing tool. The Scythe Connection <http://www.scytheconnection.com>

TOOL POUCH AND BELT On short jaunts from my truck, I always clip on a small **gardeners tool pouch** which accommodates the items I use most: A folding saw, hand pruners, gloves, and a small herbicide bottle. With these items, and a Pulaski in hand I'm prepared for any little "surprises" I may encounter out there. These light mesh tool pouches with a belt can be found at Lee Valley (above), or at garden centers. For extended trips, I use a **Duty Belt** which can be customized with a variety of different sized pouches, enabling me to carry binoculars, camera, first aid kit, poncho, flagging, and webbing. With this system, I can wear a hydration backpack, have tools easily accessible and still have both hands free. Duty belts and pouches are now available in Nylon, which is lighter than the leather ones, can be washed, and less expensive as well. These can be obtained at public safety equipment suppliers. The one I use is:

Galls, www.galls.com

HERBICIDE DISPENSER (for cut stump treatments)

I always carry a little container in my tool pouch to treat stumps when I am far afield and find plants too big to pull. This is a 5 oz. plastic cosmetics bottle, obtainable in stores which sell lotions, shampoo, etc. in bulk. It has a flip top nozzle, which comes with two size openings. You need the one with smaller round hole, which is for liquids. Don't get the nozzle with the oval hole. It is for thicker liquids like lotions, and emits too much product to easily control. If I have a lot of stumps to treat, I use a larger trigger squeeze or pump sprayer, set to dribble. These are available at garden centers and hardware stores in many sizes and styles.

TRANSPLANTING SPADE (SHARPSHOOTER)

This is the heavy duty tool I modify by sharpening the tip with points, to make an effective tool for levering plants out of the ground. Available at professional nursery suppliers, and at the forestry suppliers listed above. Don't try this with the cheap spades you find in hardware stores -They will quickly break.

SHARPENING

Files are good all around sharpening tools for keeping most tools we use sharp in the field. Unfortunately, most files that are readily available in retail outlets are "consumer grade" and dull quickly. Don't be tempted; you'll be sorry! A **Simonds 10" Multi-Kut flat file** is the best all-purpose file I have found. The Paddle Handle version is easiest to use in the field. One source is Wholesale Tool, http://www.wttool.com/product-exec/product_id/1980.