

# Essential Gardening Tools for Therapeutic Horticulture Programs Manual



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***Wheeled Tools***

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Potted Plant Dolly  
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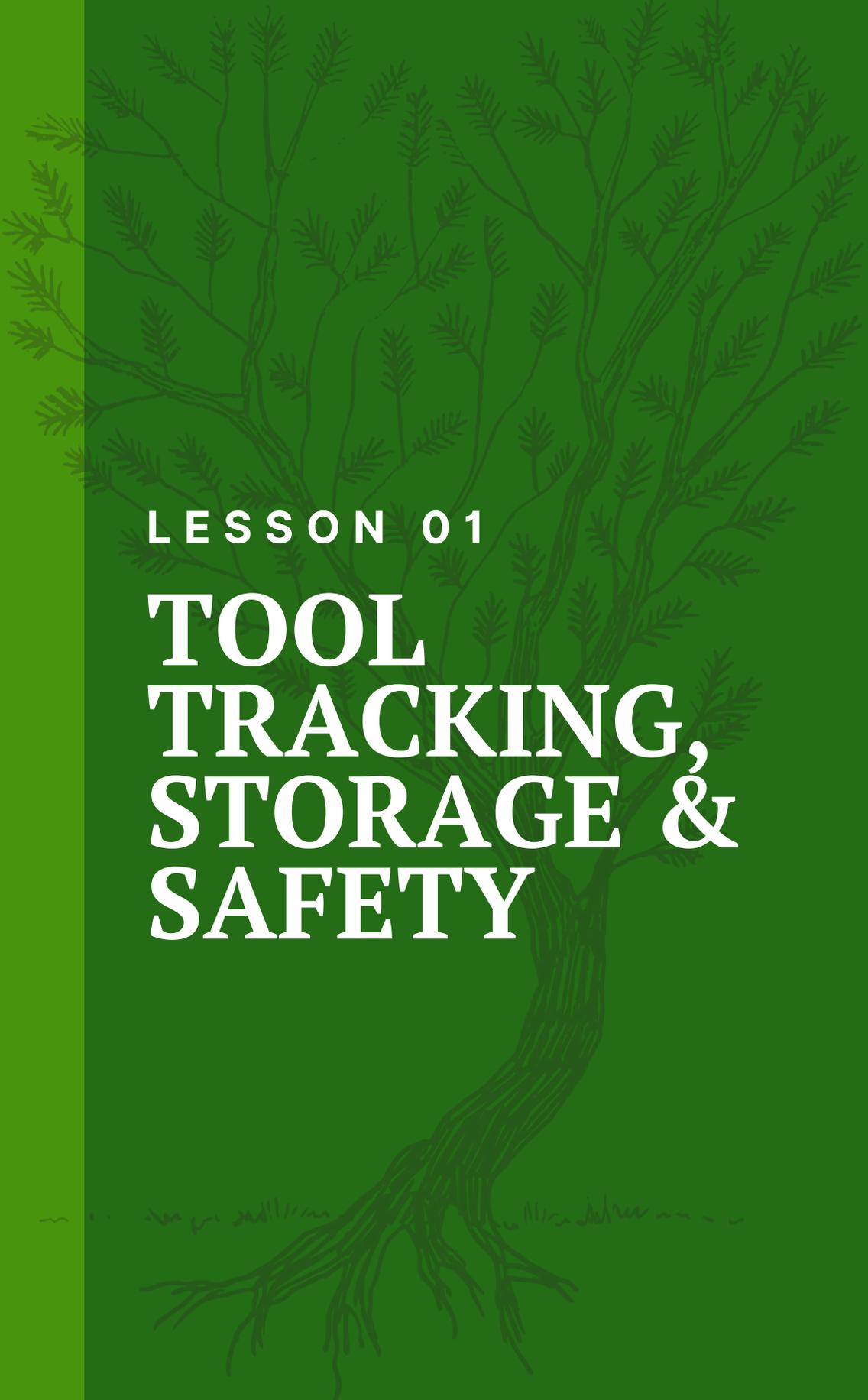
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Dibbles  
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PVC Pipe & Funnel  
Christmas Tree Waterer  
Harvest Measurement & Color Guide  
Turtle Stick

***Vision Aids***

Pocket Magnifying Glass  
Macro Lens



LESSON 01

**TOOL  
TRACKING,  
STORAGE &  
SAFETY**

# Tool Tracking, Storage & Safety

In therapeutic horticulture, tool management is directly tied to participant safety and program quality. A thoughtful approach to selecting, storing, organizing, and tracking tools ensures that sessions run smoothly, hazards are reduced, and participants feel confident and supported. This section summarizes core principles that guide safe and intentional tool use in TH settings.

## Tool Selection

- Selecting tools for a TH program should always reflect the needs of both the environment and the participants.
- Tools may be restricted in specific settings (hospitals, schools, secure facilities).
- Participant needs (physical, cognitive, behavioral) determine what is safe and appropriate.
- A smaller, intentional collection is safer and easier to manage than a full traditional toolset.
- Only keep tools that align with your activity goals and participant abilities.

**Key idea:** Match the tool to the setting, the task, and the participant.

## Tool Containment

### Location Security

- Whenever possible, store tools in a locked area to prevent unauthorized access.
- Locked storage helps reduce accidental exposure, borrowing, loss, and theft.
- Consider who has access to the site between sessions.

### Containment Method (Fixed or Mobile)

- Fixed options: sheds, closets, greenhouse bays
- Mobile options: carts, wagons, wheelbarrows, crates, vehicle trunks
- Mobile containment may or may not be lockable depending on the environment
- Choose systems that support consistent transport, setup, and cleanup

## Tool Organization

Tool organization directly influences safety, efficiency, and accountability.

### Layout and Quantity

- Organize tools based on how many you have and their size, shape, and frequency of use.
- Group like tools together (trowels with trowels, rakes with rakes).
- Use racks, bins, or pegboards that match the volume of tools you store.

## **Weight**

- Store heavy tools lower to reduce lifting strain and prevent falling injuries.
- Store light tools higher for easy access.

## **Usage Rate**

- Place frequently used tools in the most accessible spots.
- Keep high-use items near entry points or at the front of carts.
- Put rarely used items in less prominent locations.

## **Orientation and Accountability**

Strategies that help participants know where tools belong and how to return them correctly.

### **Labeling and Signage**

- Use text labels or photo labels
- Helpful for participants with low literacy or cognitive impairment
- Supports independence and consistent cleanup

### **Color Coding**

- Mark program-owned tools with colored tape or paint.
- Color code by participant for added accountability when appropriate.
- Prevents mix-ups at shared sites.

### **Stencilling**

- Trace tool outlines on pegboards or shelves.
- Provides visual cues showing exactly where each item belongs.
- Makes missing tools immediately noticeable.

## **Tool Tracking**

Accurate tracking systems reduce loss, improve safety, and support budgeting.

### **Inventory Counts**

- Maintain a written list of every tool you own.
- Record total quantities for each tool type.
- Use counts as a baseline for sessions and audits.

### **Check-In/Check-Out System**

A typical form includes:

- Tool name
- Total number that should be stored
- Date of session
- Number of tools checked out and returned
- Initials of responsible staff

This creates a record for missing or damaged items and reinforces accountability.

## **Visual Confirmation**

- Always do a quick visual sweep of storage areas after sessions.
- Look for empty rack spaces or tools out of place.
- Walk the programming area for stray tools left in garden beds or workspaces.

## **Best Practices for Tool Use**

These foundational habits support safe facilitation in every TH session.

### **Explain and Demonstrate**

- Demonstrate safe tool handling before participants begin.
- Show how to hold, use, carry, and set down each tool.
- Point out sharp edges, moving parts, or features that require caution.

### **Set Ground Rules**

Examples:

- Tools should remain below waist height.
- No horseplay or use of tools for pretend play.
- Keep blades, tines, and tool heads pointed downward when carrying or resting.
- Pass tools handle-first.
- Use each tool is used only for its intended purpose.
- Return tools to a designated place when not in use.
- Establish consequences for unsafe use (review rules, pause activity, remove tool, or notify staff/caregivers).
- Invite participants to help create the rules to support buy-in and empowerment.

### **Use the Right Tool for the Job**

- Avoid forcing tools to perform tasks they are not designed for.
- Replace or repair damaged tools promptly (cracked handles, loose heads, dull blades).
- Encourage participants to report damage immediately.

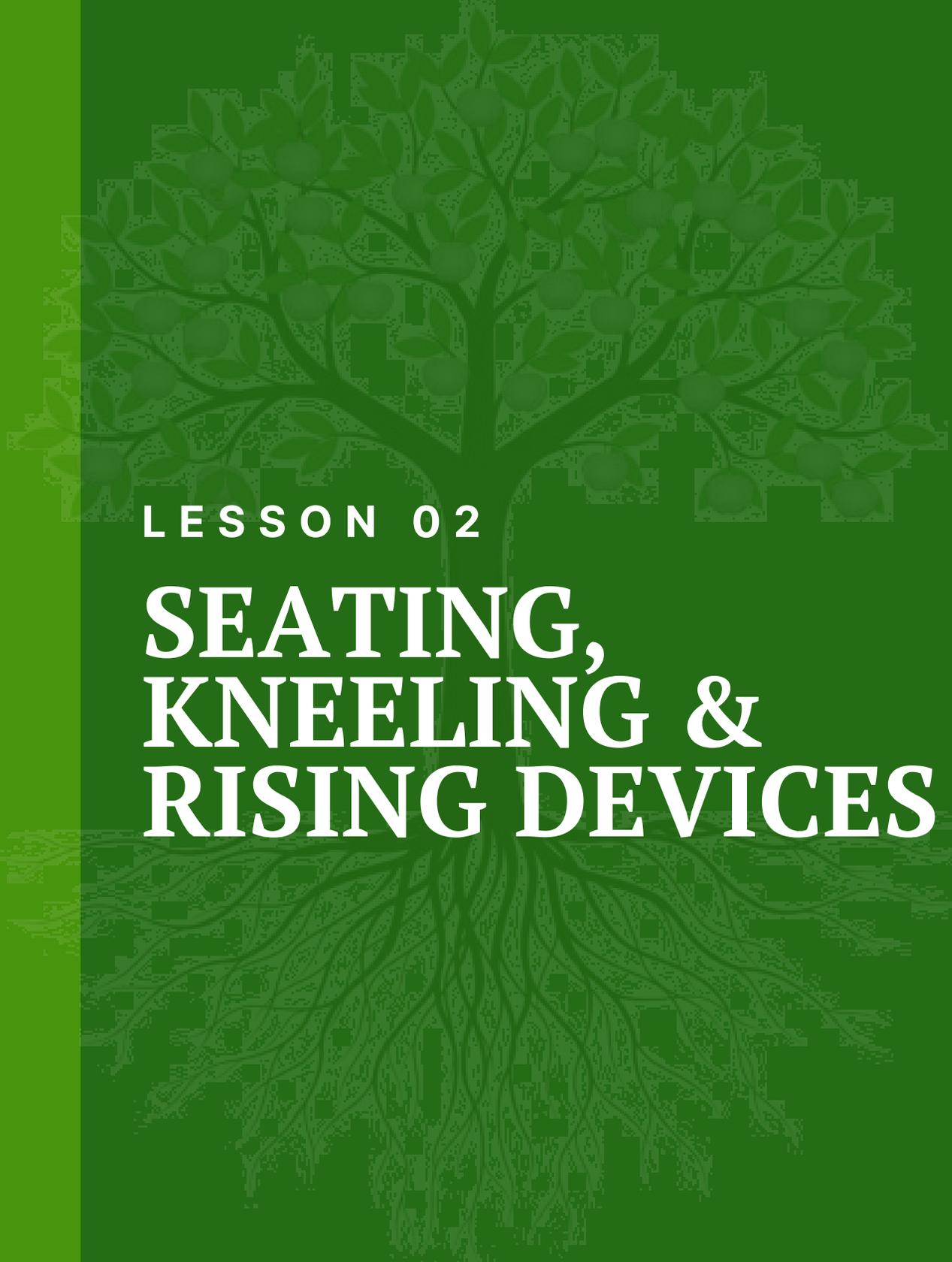
### **Tool Skills Training**

Supporting safe and competent tool use begins with practitioner preparation.

- Choose tools based on the activities you plan to facilitate.
- Watch short online tutorials for any unfamiliar tools.
- Practice using each tool yourself before introducing it to participants.
- Troubleshoot safety issues, ergonomics, and task difficulty ahead of time.
- Demonstrate new tools in a group before distributing them.
- Allow participants to practice movements under supervision when appropriate.

## Conclusion

Effective tool management is an essential part of maintaining a safe, organized, and supportive TH environment. While approaches will vary based on your space, population, and resources, the principles outlined here offer a clear foundation for safe selection, storage, organization, and use. Ultimately, **tool safety is participant safety** and it's the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that tools are managed with intention and care.



LESSON 02

**SEATING,  
KNEELING &  
RISING DEVICES**

Adaptive tools support **accessibility, comfort, and safety**, enabling participants of all abilities to fully engage in TH activities. By incorporating these tools into program design, practitioners can ensure inclusivity and meaningful participation across physical, sensory, and cognitive needs. Even traditional gardening tools are adaptive tools when chosen and used properly.

## Seating Options



### Seating with Backrests & Armrests

Provides stability and support when lowering or rising to seating surface



### Wheeled Seat

Increases mobility and reduces need to stand and sit repeatedly. Lock wheels when rising or sitting if possible.

## Picnic Benches

Shared, stable seating surface that can pose fall risks if support beam is not low enough



*High Foot Lift*



*Low Foot Lift*

## Full & Semi-Shaded Seating

Seating placed to reduce sun exposure and support comfort, temperature regulation, and endurance



*Shaded Seating/Workstation*



*Semi-Shaded Seating*



## Seating Stabilizers

Increases chair stability by widening the base, preventing sinking, tipping, or uneven balance on soft ground

## Garden Seat/Kneeler

Dual-purpose, portable garden chair that functions as a low seat or cushioned kneeling support when working close to the ground. Supports rising and kneeling actions.



*Metal, Foldable Garden Seat/Kneeler*



*Plastic, Nesting Garden Seat/Kneeler*

## 5- Gallon Bucket

Low-cost garden debris receptacle or garden stool for resting or working close to the ground



*Bucket Stool*



*Buckets Stool  
with Seat Cushions*



## Garden Rocker

Portable garden stool with rounded base. Removes pressure from knees during short and long periods of kneeling and allows gardener to swivel naturally as they work through the garden

## Garden Scooter

Combines low, mobile seating with close-to-the-ground access for garden tasks

- With/without handle
- Bench-style seat
- With core control seat support
- With height adjust seat & wide wheels



*Garden Scooter  
(With Handle)*



*Garden Scooter  
Bench-Style*



*VEVOR Garden Scooter  
Core Control Seat*



*Axiatool Garden Scooter  
Height Adjustable Seat*



*Garden Scooter  
(No Handle)*

# Kneeling & Rising Devices

## Foam Kneeling Pads

Cushion and protect knees while kneeling



*Foam Kneeling Pads*



*Thick Cushioning*



*Thinner Cushioning*

## Knee Pads

Wearable knee protection and cushioning that travels with you





### **Standard Garden Kneeler**

Low, cushioned platform with handles for rising and lowering to the ground



### **Power-Assisted Garden Kneeler**

Provides controlled, spring-assisted lifting support while lowering to the ground and back to standing

### **Knee Seat**

Provides cushioned knee support and enables comfort and reduced tension on joints and muscles while in a prolonged kneeling/gardening position



## Easy Riser Quad Cane, EZ Riser, Bandwagon Portable Chair Assist

Aids stability during transitions



*Easy Riser Quad Cane*



*EZ Riser*



*Bandwagon Portable  
Chair Assist*



LESSON 03

**HAND TOOLS,  
PRUNING &  
CUTTING  
TOOLS,  
GRIPPING AIDS**

## Hand Tools



### **Digging Claw Gloves**

Wearable gloves or glove tips with reinforced fingertips for light digging and soil manipulation



### **Thumb Harvesting Cutter**

Small blade worn on the thumb for efficient harvesting with minimal grip strength



## Roamwild Dual Grip Trowel

Adaptive trowel that offers two ergonomic gripping points and an open support cuff for added stability

## Trowels

Small digging tools used for planting, transplanting, and soil work in confined spaces.  
Available in multiple sizes and materials for comfort function, and ease.

- Plastic, metal, ergonomic
- Dual grip with cuff
- Long reach model
- Telescoping handle



*Wide, Curved  
Trowel Blade*



*Blunt, Semi-Curved  
Trowel Blade*



*Thin, Flat  
Trowel Blade*

## Cultivators

Hand tools with prongs used to loosen soil, remove weeds, and aerate planting areas



*Thin, Rounded Prongs*



*Thin, Squared Prongs*



*Flat, Wide Prongs*

## Long Reach & Telescoping Hand Tools

Hand tools that extend reach due to longer stems or telescoping stems



*Easi Grip Long Reach Tools*



*Telescoping Hand Tools*

## Hori-Hori

Multi-purpose Japanese digging knife used for cutting roots, planting, and dividing plants



*Numerous Designs*



*Used to Divide Plants*



*Easy Riser Quad Cane*



*Blunt Edged (left)  
Sharp Edged (right)*



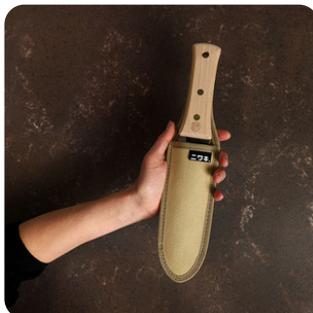
*Wooden Handle*



*Hori Hori- Caution*



*Hori Hori- Caution*



*Hori Hori Sheath*



*Hori Tactfully Disguised*



## Recycled/DIY Scooping Tools

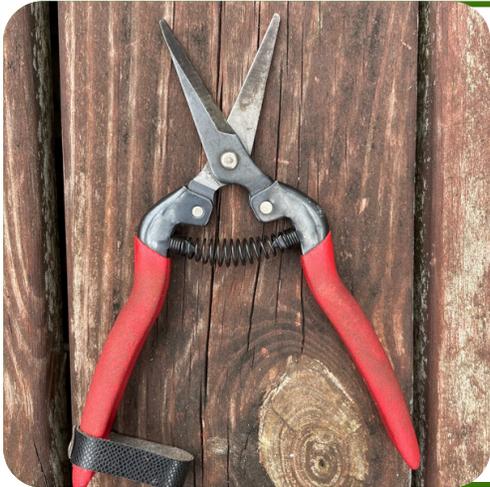
Adapted from common materials for affordability and accessibility



## Utility Scoop

Scoops large quantities of material

## Pruning & Cutting Tools



### Flower Snips

Small, lightweight pruners designed for precise trimming of thin stems, spent blooms, and delicate plant material

Cutting diameter up to 1/4" (6mm)



### Bypass Pruners

Hand pruners with two curved blades that make clean cuts on live plant stems and branches

Cutting diameter up to 3/4" (19mm)



### Hedge Shears

Long-bladed shears used to shape, trim, and maintain hedges or large areas of soft new growth

Cutting diameter up to 1/2" (12mm)



## Loppers

- Long-handled pruners that provide extra leverage for cutting thicker branches just beyond the capacity of bypass pruners.
- Cutting diameter up to 1-2" (25-50mm)
  - Standard
  - Ratcheting
  - Telescoping Handles



## One-Handed Harvesting Shears

Lightweight snips for harvesting and fine pruning tasks with one hand. Thumb strap secures shears to the hand

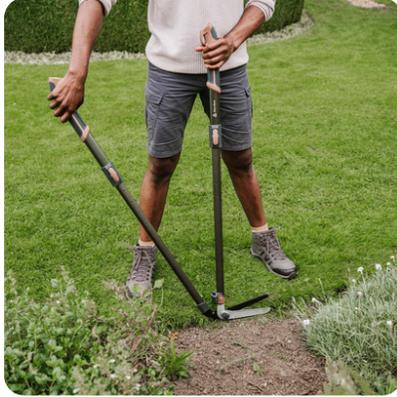


## Ring Pruner

Finger-mounted cutting tool that reduces hand fatigue and improves precise cutting control. Secures to the hand like a ring to free both hands for two-handed tasks

## Long-Handled Edging Shears

Allow edging and trimming from an upright position to reduce bending



*Long-Handled Vertical Edging Shears*



*Trigger Pull Long-Handled, Vertical Edging Shears*



## Long-Handled Lawn Shears

Used for trimming grass edges, groundcover, or spent perennials in spring/fall cleanup without kneeling (horizontal orientation)

## Pruning Saw

A compact pruning saw used to cut through larger woody branches that are too thick for loppers or pruners. Folding and fixed-blade styles available.

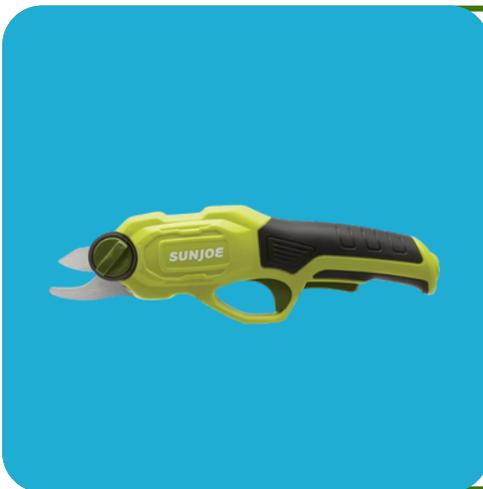
Cutting diameter 2-4" (50mm-10cm)





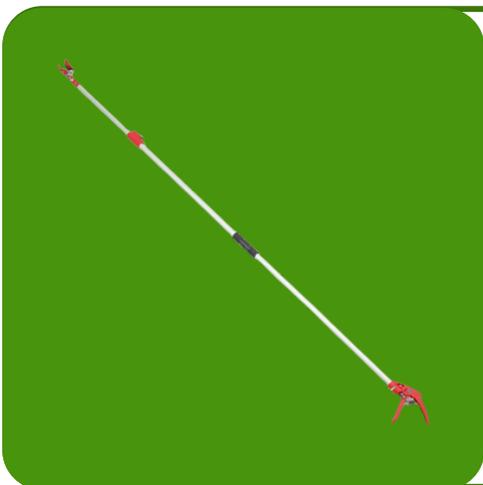
### **Ratcheting Pruners**

Requires less force in hands/fingers to cut plant material



### **Electric/Battery-Operated Pruners**

Reduces hand fatigue when making numerous cuts or when hand strength needs fortification. Not commonly used in TH programs, but can be used with proper supervision and training.



### **Extended Reach Pruners**

Pruners used to reach high, low, or deep branches from a standing or seated position



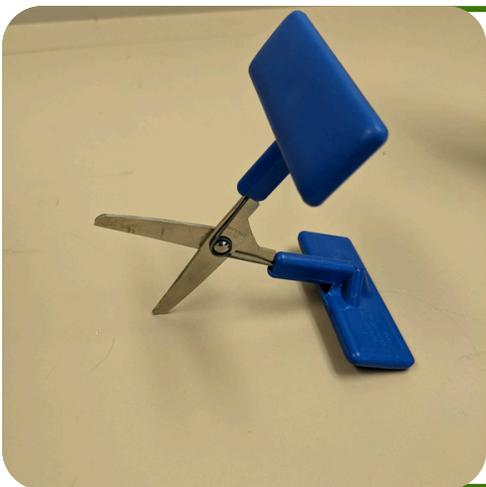
### **Cut-and-Hold Pruners**

Holds plant material after cutting. Enables one-handed pruning



### **Scissor Mouse**

Adaptive paper-cutting tool with a concealed blade that supports safety, ease of use, and reduced hand strain. Not ideal for making curved cuts.



### **Push-Down Scissors**

Spring-loaded scissors that cut with downward pressure against a hard surface rather than squeezing. Can include stability mount for tabletop



### **Long Loop Scissors**

Scissors that apply outward pressure against hand so it remains firmly against palm during use. Helpful for those with decreased grip strength or spasticity



### **Balloon Ribbon Cutters**

Enclosed cutting tools that reduces exposure to blades while trimming ribbon, string, twine

# Gripping Aids

## Rubber or Foam Cushion Grips

Improve comfort and grip security



*Foam Cushion Grip*



*Rubber Cushion Grips*



## Faucet Grip

Can be mounted on most standard 'knob-style' spigot handles and makes turning spigots easier and reduces wrist strain

## Strap Grips & Strap Grip Gloves

Secure tools to the hand for stability



*Rubber Strap Grips*



*Strap Grip Gloves*

## Angled Handle Support Grip

Changes approach angle to the garden and lowers wrist strain during repetitive tasks



## Custom Grips

Paper mâché wrapped around tool handle or any other DIY method to create a participant-specific tool grip



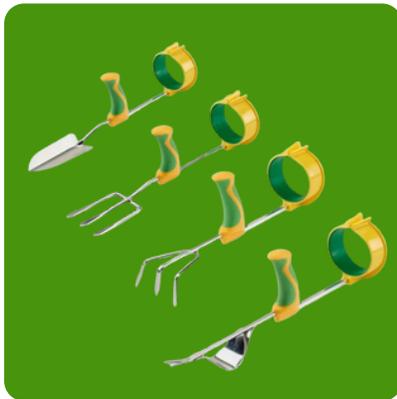
*Paper Mâché Grip*



*Paper Mâché Grip with Sports Tape*

## Support Cuffs

Wrist or forearm supports that assist with tool stabilization and reduced grip demand



*Easi-Grip Hand Tools with Cuff Support*



*Extended Length Easi-Grip Tools*

## Reacher-Grabber Tool

Long-handled gripping tool that allows users to pick up items without bending



*Reacher-Grabber Tool*



*Reacher-Grabber  
with Support Cuff*



LESSON 04

**LONG-  
HANDLED  
TOOLS**

# Brooms



## Kitchen Broom

Lightweight, soft-bristled broom for sweeping indoor floors or smooth outdoor surfaces and tight spaces



## Push Broom

Wide, sturdy, stiff-bristled broom for moving larger debris across open areas indoors or outdoors on smooth or rough surfaces



## Dry Mop

Flat or string mop used to collect loose debris and water that falls on the floor during programming to minimize slipping risks

# Shovels



## Sharp Shooter (Narrow-Bladed Spade)

A narrow, long-bladed shovel/spade for breaking surface tension, digging precise holes, or digging trenches

Note: word 'sharp shooter' may be triggering for some populations, most notably military members/veterans



## Steel Spade

A sturdy, heavy, flat-bladed tool for cutting into soil, edging garden beds, and cutting/prying roots and rocks



## Garden Spade

A short-handled, flat-blade spade for digging, edging, planting, and dividing perennials



### **Round Point Shovel**

A curved, pointed shovel for general digging, planting, breaking soft ground, or scooping and moving loose, dense material like soil, compost, or sand



### **Square Head Shovel**

A shovel for scooping, scraping, and moving loose materials from a hard, flat surface



### **Scoop Shovel**

A deep, wide shovel for lifting and moving lightweight materials like mulch, snow, or compost

## Ergonomic Shovel

Shovel with handle features that enable more gripping points and angles

- **Sun Joe Ergonomic Shovel** – Shovel features a spring-loaded assist handle located midway down the shaft to reduce back strain and improve leverage
- **Radius Ergonomic Shovel** – Shovel with circular handle, which offers multiple comfortable grip positions



*Sun Joe Ergonomic Shovel*



*Radius Ergonomic Shovel*

## Blade Lift

The curvature and depth of a blade



*Blade Lift- 4"*



*Blade Lift- 1"*



## Handle Lift

The angle where the handle meets the blade

## Rakes



## Leaf Rake

Wide, plastic tines that collect leaves and light debris



## Spring Rake

Springy, long, metal tines that collect moderately sized debris. Most commonly used rake in gardening/TH



### **Hard Rake (Bow Rake)**

Short, rigid, metal tines that collect and grade heavy material

## **Forks**



### **Garden Fork**

3-4 rigid, thick tines to dig into compacted soil, lift root vegetables, or break up clods



### **Pitchfork**

3-5 curved, thin, long tines spaced widely apart. Lift and spread light, fluffy material like mulch, hay, or compost

# Hoes



## Garden Hoe

Allows upright or seated weeding. Used to pile and move soil

## Scuffle Hoe (Stirrup Hoe)

Allows upright or seated weeding. Reduces surface tension due to 'stirrup' shape



## Long Reach Tools



### Easi-Grip Long Reach Tools

Reduces bending and reaches into raised or in-ground beds or to the ground



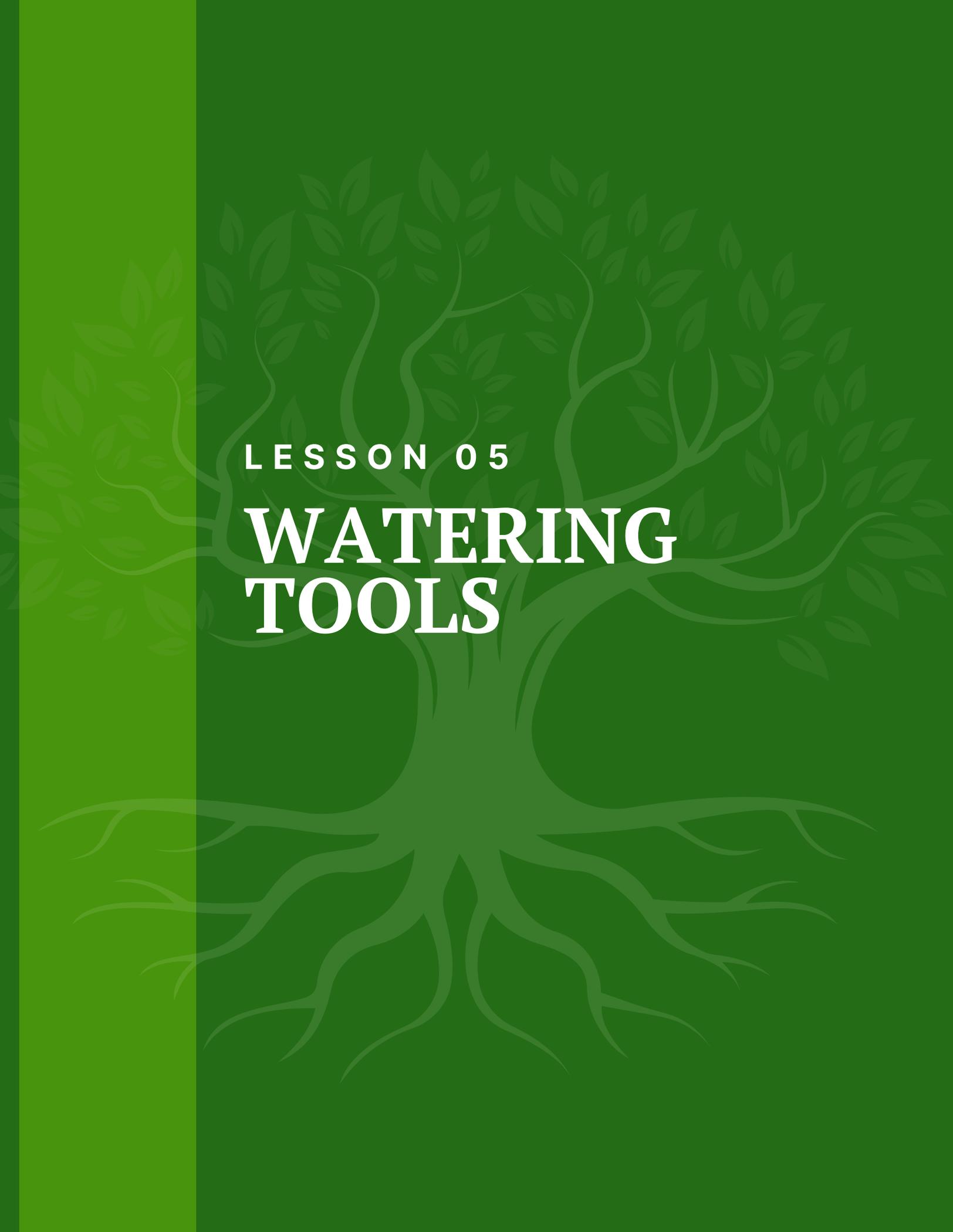
### Reacher-Grabber Tool

Picks up objects without bending



### Telescoping Hand Tools

Adjustable length for multiple users, tasks, and easy transport



LESSON 05

# WATERING TOOLS

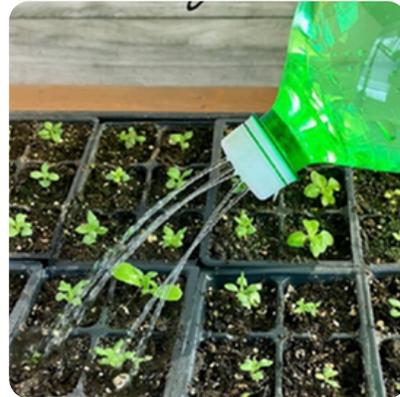


## Watering Cans

Multiple sizes for varying strength, uses, and ability levels

## Bottle-Top Waterer (DIY)

Low-cost and/or DIY solution for gently watering with small amounts of wa



## Houseplant Helper Bottle

Squeeze bottle with thin, directed spout



## Pump Sprayer

Reduces repetitive motion strain while watering, spraying, or misting plants



## Plant Pulley

Allows a hanging basket to pull towards someone so they can water and maintain it at ground level



## Portable Watering System

Portable water tank with motor that pumps water through a hose onto indoor or outdoor plants. Excellent for settings that have no/limited access to water or when many plants in different areas of a building need to be watered.

## Garden Hoses



### 5/8" (16 mm) Hose

**Distributes:**

17 gallons/min (64 L/min.)

8-12 lbs. empty (4-6 kg.)

41-45 lbs. full (19-21 kg.)



### 3/4" (19 mm) Hose

**Distributes:**

23 gallons/min. (87 L/min.)

12-18 lbs. empty (5-8 kg.)

62-68 lbs. full (28-31 kg.)



### Coil Hose

Thin diameter, compact hose that connects to sink faucet or outdoor spigot



## Hose Splitter

Metal or plastic hose spigot attachment that splits a single flow of water to two or more so several hoses can be attached to one spigot



## Quick Couplers

Metal or plastic hose attachments that eliminate wrist twisting by allowing hoses to attach with the pull of a coupler sleeve



## Hose Reel

Mobile reel that stores hoses neatly but can damage hoses over time



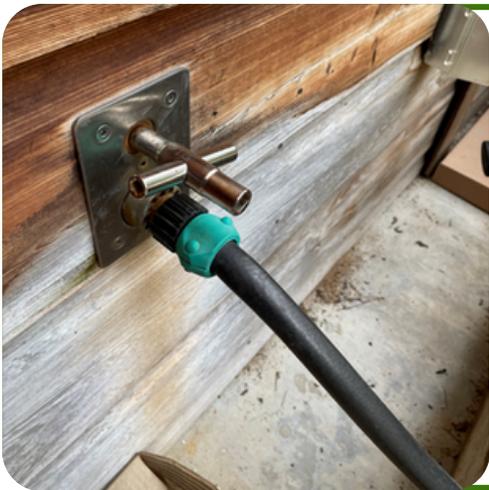
## Hose Mount

Wall-mounted hanger that supports hose organization and accessibility



## Hose Box/Pot

Decorative container that conceals and organizes garden hoses that will always be coiled in the same location



## Hose Key

Tool used to turn outdoor water valves on that don't have a traditional knob. Meant to eliminate unauthorized use of water spigot



### **Standard Watering Wand**

Wand that delivers water in precise locations. Controlled by lever, switch, or squeeze trigger valve.



### **Extended Reach Wand**

Very long or extendable wand that reaches high into air or far into garden. Helps with hanging baskets or deep gardens.



### **Thumb-Control Trigger Wand Valve**

'Cruise control' trigger-type, set it and forget it



## Squeeze Trigger Wand Valve

'Accelerator pedal' trigger-type, precise water delivery valve with the squeeze of the trigger

## Wand Breaker

'Rain' style or multi-function breakers provide versatility for watering tasks



*Shower 'Rain' Breaker*



*Multi-Function Breaker*



## Soil Probe

Measures soil moisture below the surface to guide watering decisions and show soil quality

## Task & Hose Timers

**Task Timer:** Visual and/or auditory timer used to structure sessions, tasks, or rest breaks

**Hose Timer:** Timer that screws onto hose spigot to control water flow at set times



*Timer*



*Hose Timer*

## Traditional & Barrel-Style Oscillating Sprinklers

Provide broad, even water coverage across garden beds



*Traditional  
Oscillating Sprinkler*



*Barrel-Style  
Oscillating Sprinkler*



## **Circular Spot Sprinkler (Frog)**

Stationary sprinkler that delivers a cone of focused water to a specific area. Saves human labor and soaks roots deeply

## **Slow Release Watering Bags**

Gradually deliver water to plants over time to reduce human labor/time demands



*Vertical Design*



*Horizontal Design*

LESSON 06

**CONTAINMENT,  
WHEELED,  
SEEDING &  
VISION AID  
TOOLS**

# Containment Tools

## Bucket Buddy, Tool Sleeves, Aprons

Promote accountability by keeping hand tools contained and close to participants and practitioner



*Bucket Buddy*



*Tool Sleeve*



*Tool Apron*



## Tidy Bins

Hard, plastic bin that serves as portable tabletop potting bench. Contains water, soil, and debris from spilling.

## Potting Mats

Soft, water-proof, foldable mat that serves as a lightweight portable potting bench.  
Contains water, soil, debris.



## Collection Bins & Bags

Small, large, and customized bins and bags that collect leaves and garden debris

*Large  
Collection Bins*



*Small Buckets  
& Bins*



*Traditional  
Tarp*



*Leaf Bags*



# Wheeled Tools

## Four-Wheeled Garden Carts

### Flatbed Cart

Open platform cart used for transporting items that need to remain flat



### Bucket-Style Dump Cart

Wheeled cart with tipping bucket for moving soil, mulch, or debris





### **Collapsible Canvas Cart**

Can be collapsed and stored in small spaces or in a vehicle to transport materials and plants as needed- indoors and outdoors



### **Lockable Materials Cart**

Securely contains and transports sharp or dangerous materials during transport from one programming site to another

## One and Two Wheeled Wheelbarrows

Transport materials while distributing weight to reduce lifting strain. Two-wheeled wheelbarrow requires less need for balance & core strength



*One-Wheeled Wheelbarrow*



*Two-Wheeled Wheelbarrow*

## Burro Buddy & Little Burro

Wheelbarrow accessory that allows user to carry tools and materials on mounted shelf along with a full wheelbarrow of material



*Burro Buddy*



*Little Burro*

## Plastic, Metal, Wood Garden Carts

Variety of carts offering different weight capacities and durability



*Plastic*



*Metal*



*Wood*

## Nursery Carts

One or multi-shelf carts designed for moving plants and supplies efficiently while remaining flat



*Single Tier*



*Two-Tiered*

## Dollies & Caddies



### Trashcan Dolly

Wheeled dolly that fixes to trashcans to mobilize materials and debris across hard, smooth surfaces. Allows loose material like potting soil, vermiculite, and perlite to be stored under tables and wheeled out when needed.



### Potted Plant Dolly

Wheeled platform that allows heavy plants/pots to be moved without hurting your back



### Plant Caddy

Low-profile, wheeled base that supports mobility of heavy containers



## Hand Truck

Upright dolly used for transporting tall or heavy loads



## Nursery Ball Cart

Specialized cart designed to move balled-and-burlapped trees and shrubs or objects with round bases



## Lifting Straps

Assistive straps that distribute weight and reduce strain during lifting tasks

## Seeding Tools



### Seeding Square

Guide that assists with seed spacing and making a 'square foot gardening' template/impressions in soil



### Seeding Rulers

Measures spacing and depth to support accurate seed placement



### Seed Tape

Pre-spaced seeds adhered at proper distances along a biodegradable strip of paper for easier sowing

## Seed Dispenser / Seed Sprinkler Bottles

Provides controlled, even release of seeds



*Seed Dispenser*



*Seed Sprinkler Bottles*



## Tweezers

Assists in handling small or pelleted seeds



## Wet Toothpick

Allows precise placement of small seeds using moisture adhesion



## Flour-Dusted Seeds

Improves seed visibility for even distribution during sowing

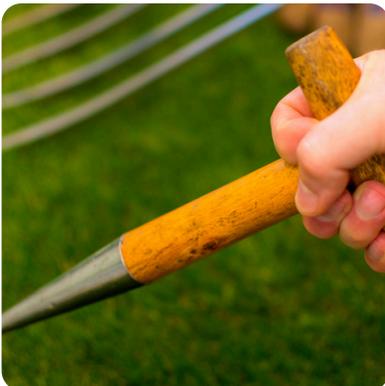


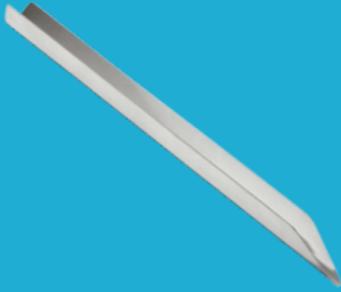
## Pelleted Seed

Seeds that have an inert substance surrounding them to make the seed size larger and easier to see, grasp, and handle

## Dibbles

Metal, wood, plastic implements that make holes in soil for seeds. Some provide measurement marks to guide planting depth.





## Reagent Digger

Hand tool designed for creating uniform planting holes and transplanting seedlings

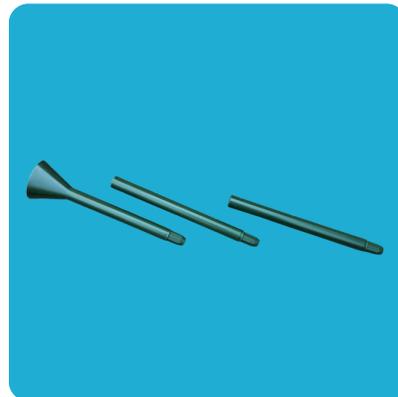


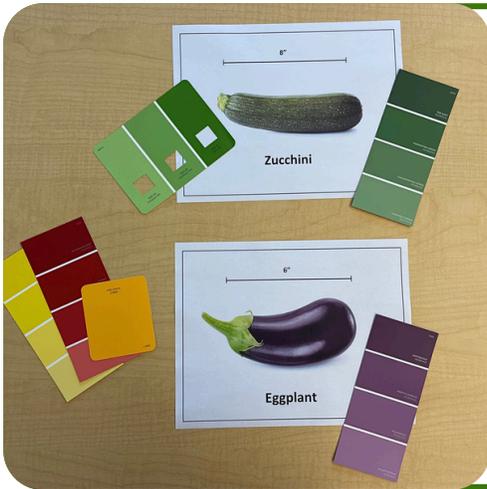
## PVC Pipe & Funnel

Simple DIY seed planting aid that allows the user to drop seeds into/onto the ground while remaining standing or seated

## Christmas Tree Waterer

Funnel-style watering tool that delivers water directly at plant bases from standing, kneeling, or seated position





## Harvest Measurement & Color Guide

Visual guide that enables users to compare the size and color of produce to ensure maturity before harvesting



## Turtle Stick

Playful measuring tool used to support spacing, depth, and engagement

## Vision Aids



### **Pocket Magnifying Glass**

Inexpensive, small magnifying glass that folds safely in a pocket. Enhances ability to view small details, objects, insects, etc.

### **Macro Lens**

Clip-on lens for smart phones that magnifies items



*Clip-On Macro Lens for Phones*



*Clip-On Macro Lens for Phones*

