

# THE 'BASIC SEVEN' TOOLS

By STANLEY SCHULER

With his thoughts on springtime gardening chores, the novice gardener may wonder what to select first when confronted by a fancy display of tools at the garden center. For a start he will do well indeed if he chooses the basic seven. Then sometime in the future he can add



mon mistake. Acquisition of "two-in-one" tools and "handy sets" of bargain tools is usually pure waste. First-class tools are the best buy.

Fine tools can be readily identified, not only by their slightly higher prices, but also by their construction. A good tool is made of heavy metal, with the head securely attached to a sturdy handle.

Inferior, lightweight metal and flimsy wood handles are easy enough to discover, even when coated with gleaming paint (which often is itself a giveaway). But it is not so easy to see a weak connection between tool head and handle. In general, it may be said that the longer the shank the sturdier the tool. (The shank, or ferrule is the tubular extension of the head that wraps around the handle.) Rivets driven through the shank into the handle also add strength to the connection. A tool head that is simply nailed to the tip of a handle is practically guaranteed to come loose after one bout with a recalcitrant rock or root.

### Proper Balance

A good garden tool also must have the right "feel." The gardener who tests the weight and balance of the various tools on display in a store may be a menace to other customers, but he is only exercising his right to determine which tool is best for him.

Finally, a good tool is designed and constructed to protect the user's hands. For example, the grain of a wood handle should run perfectly straight. If there are too many grain rings showing along the sides of the handle, splintering will result.

A trowel handle should be thick enough and long enough to fit comfortably in the hand, and should be contoured to a somewhat bulbous end. If the handle is straight, thin or short, it will chafe the palm. Similarly, grass shears which have an up-and-down handle action are preferable to scissors type shears because, although they are slightly less reliable, they do not blister the user's thumb and fingers so badly.

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all of those specialty gadgets, if he finds a need for them.

These basic seven hand tools are a garden rake, preferably of the level-head type; a lawn rake; a round-pointed, long-handled shovel; a six-inch hoe; a full-sized trowel with three-inch-wide blade; a pair of professional pruning shears with overlapping blades, and a pair of grass shears.

As time and gardening activities go on, other tools may be found desirable: a transplanting trowel; a three- or four-pronged cultivator (with a short handle for flower beds or a long handle for vegetables); a spading fork; a grass whip, and a short-handled, flat, square-edged spade that substitutes for an edging knife and sod lifter.

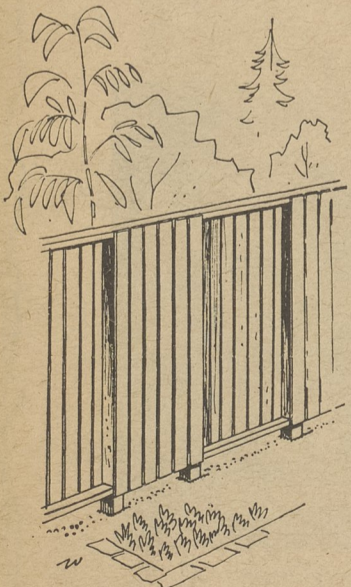
### To Fit the Problem

Beyond this, the gardener's tool requirements depend on his soil and plantings. He may need hedge shears, lopping shears, an extendable tree pruner and a pruning saw. A Connecticut gardener is almost certain to want a pick mattock to contend with up-cropping rocks and spreading poison ivy. A tamper is useful to repair the ravages of moles as well as to press down small seeded patches in the lawn.

The gardener who does not exercise good judgment, however, may find that he has purchased aggravation instead of help. Stretching the budget by buying second or third quality tools is an all-too-com-

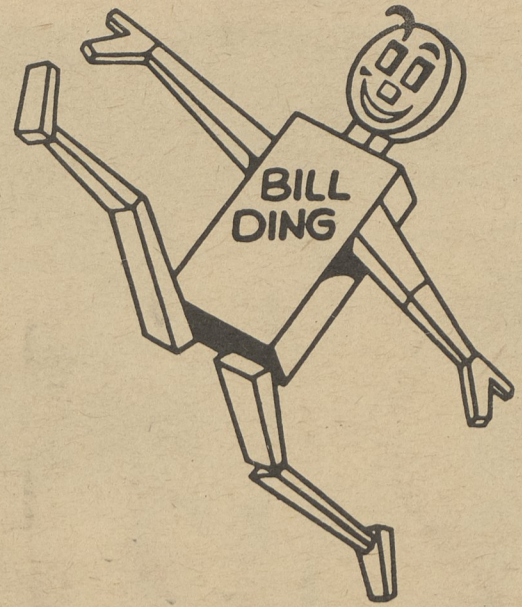
mon mistake. Best way to clean and freshen painted wood siding is to scrub it with a solution of detergent. Use a long handled scrub brush for the job. Rinse with the garden hose.

### Estate Fence



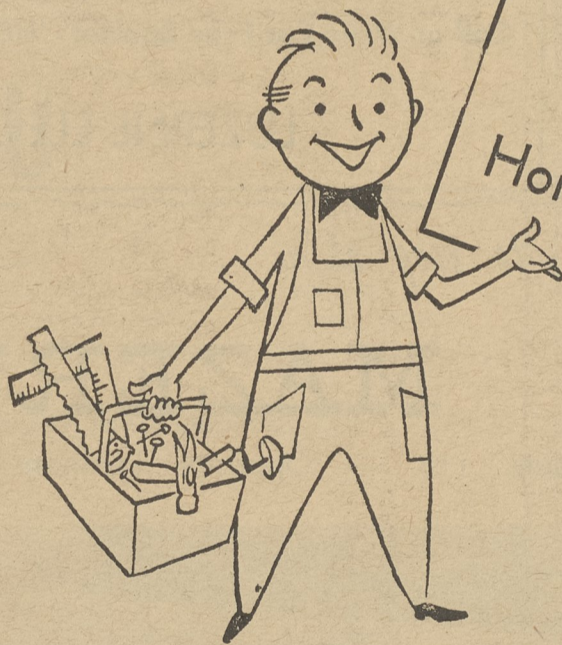
This attractive variation of the board fence is ideal for a long, tall estate fence. In alternating panels of the fence, 1x4 western red cedar boards are nailed on the front or back of the fence frame. Pattern produces three-dimensional effect and good shadow lines. For a free copy of a booklet telling how to build fences of various styles, write: Fence Book, Department PR, West Coast Lumbermen's Association, 1410 S.W. Morrison St., Portland 5, Oregon.

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