



# ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

## Welcome to my weekly series!

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or  
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**Question #1 this Week:** *Last week you wrote about taking care of pots before winter. Is there anything special I should be doing with my tools?*

**Linda's Answer:** Tool care is very important and fall is a great time to work on them. There are five things you should do: Sharpen, Repair, Oil, Clean and Sterilize.



- **Sharpening:** Keeping your tools sharp is very important. Pruning with a dull saw or shear can cause lots of damage to a plant. A clean cut lets the plant heal properly and is much less susceptible to infection in the wound area. You can either sharpen your tools yourself, or bring them to a professional sharpener. Generally hardware stores and garden centers can provide these services. I prefer to use diamond files when I sharpen my hand pruners. They come in a set of 3 with different levels of coarseness (Coarse, Fine and Extra Fine). We sell these at our office if you're interested.
- **Repairing:** Check and tighten any loose screws or nuts on all of your pruning equipment. Check the handles on all of your rakes and shovels. Are there any cracks or are they loose? Replacement handles can be found at hardware stores or garden centers.
- **Oiling:** Keep the moving parts of your equipment well-oiled. Use WD40 or other lightweight oil on the joints and metal surfaces of your hand pruners and loppers. This both lubricates them as well as inhibits rusting. Apply a thin layer of linseed oil to wood handles to help prevent them from drying out and cracking.
- **Cleaning and Sterilizing:** Bacteria and other pathogens can hitch a ride from an infected plant to a healthy plant on your blades, spades, trowels or rakes. When pruning, you're creating wounds and if you're using infected blades then those diseases can be passed directly. Regularly disinfect your tools to help control the spread of disease throughout your gardens. After finishing work, clean the debris off and rub down your tools with a clean cotton ball and rubbing alcohol. Use steel wool to remove any rust and always store tools in a clean, dry location.

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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