

Tools for the Garden

Submitted by Lynnette Westfall

Are you tired of winter and can't wait to get into the garden? In just a few short weeks (hopefully!) the snow will be gone, the ground unthawed and your garden will come alive, woohoo!



I wanted to share with you some of the tools which I swear by, in hopes it may help you in your garden this spring. Do you own a 'dandy' fork? I've owned one for probably 20 years - it was a gift from a friend, but I considered it kind of useless and left it in the shed until last spring - silly me! For some reason, my dandelions were incredibly robust and deep rooted last year. Actually, I know the reason...it's because they feed off the same food the lilies get and they were fertilized well the previous year. For the most part, the dandelions were growing right in the rows amongst the lilies. Because of this proximity to the lilies I'm not about to twist or yank them out since bulbs & bulblets would likely come with them. I also abide by the rule that you must get roots wherever possible when weeding. Twisting and yanking are NOT conducive to getting roots with the top, so I figured I needed something narrow to target just the dandelion crown but forceful enough to work on those monsters. I thought of that dandelion fork and

decided to give it a whirl. I was pleasantly surprised to find out just how effective and useful it was! Roots do come with it in most cases and I found a gentle hand was more effective than a forceful one when tugging them out, using one hand to tug and one for leverage. The tool is shaped perfectly for the job. It now has a permanent spot in my garden tool chest.

My most used tool in the garden is a Garden Bandit. Heard of them? The first time I saw one I knew they were pure genius, especially with lilies because you can get right up to the base of the stem with it! After using it for a summer, I thought to myself 'all this needs to make it better is to put it on a long handle just like a hoe'. Lo and behold if I didn't see them available exactly like that the next year. They went one step further and put it on a telescoping handle! I bet you'll find them in many garden centres now; I bought my first one at the Devonian Gardens store. I'm sure it wouldn't be hard to make your own homemade version either. A word of caution on the handheld - make sure you get one with the BRIGHT-EST handle color you can find! I would frequently lose my green handled Bandit because it blended in too well with the garden when I'd leave it where I happened to be working with it. I always intended to go back where I left off but you know how that goes.....Now I tie a bright pink plastic ribbon around the handle every spring and haven't lost it since!



Here's a tip I learned from Fred Fellner; carry a putty knife in your pocket when you are using the shovel in damp or wet soil. If you've done this before, you know how badly the soil can stick to the shovel, front & back. The putty knife makes a neat job of stripping it away so you aren't hefting an extra 5 lbs at the end of the shovel. It also works fabulous for scraping sticky soil off the bottom of your shoes when it builds up!

Looks like I'm out of space so I shall end this with one last tip for preventative spring maintenance on your lily beds. Botrytis is a pain to you and your lilies but treating the soil in late fall or early spring goes a long, long way in easing that pain or preventing it altogether if you had it the year before, because sure as the sun is yellow it will return once you've had it if you don't do a good cleanup! Did you know you could mix hydrated lime powder 3 to 1 ratio with sand, then spread it 1/4" thick over areas to control botrytis spores? That's a tip I learned from Eugene Fox. He also said you could see botrytis growing before it actually shows on foliage, if you wear BluBlocker sunglasses. Check them out at www.blublocker.com!

Top right:
A handy-dandy
dandelion fork

Top left:
A disgustingly
healthy
dandelion

Middle right:
Handheld
Garden Bandit
and below it
the telescoping
handle version.