

Tried & tested / Folding garden knives

Tools with 101 uses

Geoff Hodge tests folding garden knives for all those necessary jobs

Geoff Hodge
Gardening journalist

FROM cutting string to taking cuttings, harvesting vegetables and dead-heading - every gardener needs a good garden knife.

Folding knives are the most convenient and the safest to carry around - I never go anywhere without mine, safely tucked away in a pocket. And, although there are specialist pruning, propagation and grafting knives, I've never had a need for any of these - my straight-edged knife has served me well for any job I do.

The main choice is between the material used for the blade - either carbon steel or stainless steel. Most professionals consider carbon steel to be the best, but it does rust and needs to be oiled to keep rust away. Stainless steel rarely rusts, but generally stainless steel blunts quicker than carbon steel and needs sharpening more often.

Which ever type you go for, you will need a good sharpener; see my guide to tool sharpeners in the December 20 issue of GN.

If you're going to use your knife for a long time or use it to cut through quite thick or difficult materials, your knife

must be comfortable to hold and use.

The main handle choice is between wood or plastic. A wooden-handled knife just feels, and looks, so much better than plastic - but may need maintenance to keep in good condition. But in all honesty, plastic handles are just as good, look after themselves and, as most are red, they're easier to find when you mislay them!

The test

I tested the knives on a range of materials - string, broccoli stems, woody fuchsia stems and paper - to see how well they cut and kept a sharp edge

before they became blunt. I tested each knife for 20 minutes to also compare how comfortable they felt with extended use.

Before I started I thought that the knives with the longest blades would probably perform better than those with shorter blades as there's more cutting area, but this wasn't a factor on the materials I used.

I selected my top three knives, which includes the Best Buy that had everything you'd look for in a quality knife for use all around the garden.

Next time In two weeks' time Geoff looks at the best small water features for your garden.

Top three

Felco Victorinox Grafting/General Purpose Knife (39050)

A great, lightweight knife combining two famous brands - Felco secateurs and Victorinox, makers of the Swiss Army Knife. Produced a good cut and was really comfortable to use. The blade housing has a metal alloy lining to protect the blade.

- **Blade material** Stainless steel
- **Blade length** 5.5cm (2¼in)
- **Handle material** Nylon plastic
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £14.99



Tina Grafting/General Purpose Knife 605

Tina knives are recognised as the choice of professional horticulturists - I was certainly very proud when I was given mine. They cut beautifully and are shaped to perfectly fit the hand. This was my favourite knife in the test, however I couldn't give it Best Buy due to the high price tag compared to the others.

- **Blade material** Carbon steel
- **Blade length** 5.5cm (2¼in)
- **Handle material** Walnut
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £69.99



Whitby & Co Horticultural Knife CK26

A fabulous, quality crafted knife with a solid brass body. It cut well and was comfortable to hold and use. Its weighty, solid construction gave me confidence when cutting through difficult materials.

- **Blade material** Stainless steel
- **Blade length** 6.8cm (2¾in)
- **Handle material** Rosewood
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £15.95



WIN OUR BEST BUY

We have 10 of the Whitby & Co Best Buy knives to give away! Send your name and address to Garden News Garden Knife Giveaway, PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough PE7 2FE or enter online at www.greatcompetitions.co.uk
Closing date is January 31. Please write 'do not contact' if you don't want to be contacted by us or by carefully selected partner organisations.



Spear & Jackson Razorsharp Large Garden Knife

A good general-purpose knife with a large blade, which would be especially suited for cutting through larger and tougher materials. This is balanced with a large, chunky handle. The contoured handgrip with 'stops' at each end are very useful and gave me confidence when cutting tough material.

- **Blade material** Chromed carbon steel
- **Blade length** 6cm (2½in)
- **Handle material** Plastic
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £14.49



Taylor's Eye Witness Lambfoot 841

A lovely, well-made quality knife, which cut with ease and I enjoyed using it. Unfortunately, I found the handle a little too short for me and it dug into my palm with extensive use.

- **Blade material** Stainless steel
- **Blade length** 6cm (2½in)
- **Handle material** Plastic
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £12



Wenger Gardening Pocket Knife 17500

A lovely lightweight knife. Very similar to the Felco Victorinox knife, but not as comfortable to use because of the raised stud housings on the handle.

- **Blade material** Stainless steel
- **Blade length** 5.5cm (2¼in)
- **Handle material** Plastic
- **Comfort in use** ★★★★★
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £13.95



Suppliers

Bahco from SNA Europe (UK)
01709 731731
www.bahco.com

Burgon & Ball
0114 233 8262
www.burgonandball.com

Draper Tools
02380 494333 for stockist details
www.draper.co.uk

Velco Victorinox from Burton McCall
0116 234 4611
www.uk.felco.com

Opinel from Whitby & Co Details below
Spear & Jackson
0114 281 4242
www.spear-and-jackson.com

Taylor's Eye Witness
0114 272 4221
www.taylor's-eye-witness.co.uk

Tina from Burton McCall
0116 234 4646
www.burton-mccall.co.uk
Wenger from Whitby & Co Details below

Whitby & Co
01539 721032
www.whitbyandco.co.uk

Offers / Great deals for gardeners



Snowdrops 'in the green'

Fantastic January offers from **Mr Fothergill's**

SNOWDROPS can sometimes be difficult to grow from dry bulbs and by far the best way to ensure a garden full of colour is to plant bulbs 'in the green'. They are lifted with their leaves immediately after flowering so you know you have strong, vigorous plants that will rapidly colonise your garden! So fill your garden with our great offers of both single and double-flowered snowdrops to welcome in the spring.

Single-flowered *Galanthus nivalis* will give you simple good looks and a sweet scent of honey. The price of 30 single snowdrops bulbs is £11.95 or buy 60 bulbs for £23.90 and receive an extra 40 snowdrop bulbs FREE!

Double-flowered *Galanthus nivalis* 'Flore

Pleno' is robust, growing up to 10cm (4in) tall. 20 bulbs will cost only £11.95 or buy 40 bulbs for just £23.90 and receive 20 bulbs FREE!

Alternatively, you can have a mix of both single and double-flowering types growing in your garden and save £20. Receive 60 single-flowering bulbs and 40 double-flowering bulbs for just £27.80.

Delivery from February onwards depending on lifting conditions.



ORDER FORM

How to order

By post Fill in your details on the coupon and send with a cheque made payable to Mr Fothergill's Seeds. Please write your name and address on the back. Or complete your credit/debit card details.

Credit / Debit Card

Order Hotline

0844 770 4657

Lines open 8am - 8pm, 7 days per week

Orders should be over £10

All plants will be delivered from February 2012 onwards (please note that we do not send order acknowledgements).

Packages may be sent separately.

Closing date: End of February 2012

YOUR DATA PROTECTION PREFERENCES

Bauer Media (Publishers of Garden News) may also like to contact you by post or phone. Please tick if you do not wish to be contacted by us

or by carefully selected partner organisations

DATA

ITEM	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Single-flowering <i>Galanthus nivalis</i> (30 snowdrops in the green)	£11.95		
Single-flowering <i>Galanthus nivalis</i> (60 snowdrops in the green + 40 bulbs free)	£23.90		
Double-flowering <i>G. nivalis</i> 'Flore Pleno' (20 snowdrops in the green)	£11.95		
Double-flowering <i>G. nivalis</i> 'Flore Pleno' (40 snowdrops in the green + 20 bulbs free)	£23.90		
60 single-flowering + 40 double-flowering bulbs (Save £20)	£27.80		
GN170112	TOTAL		

PLEASE SEND ORDER & PAYMENT TO:

Garden News Snowdrop Offer, Mr Fothergill's Seeds, Rookery Farm, Holbeach St John, Spalding Lincs PE12 8SG

I enclose a cheque/postal order for £_____ made payable to Mr

Fothergill's Seeds (with name and address on the back) OR charge my Visa/

Mastercard / Maestro card with:

£_____ Card Number _____

Start Date _____ / _____ Expiry Date _____ / _____

Issue No (Maestro/Switch) _____ Signature _____

Title _____ Initial _____ Surname _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____
