

# ↘ Tried & tested / Rakes

**Saving seed**  
It's time to start collecting your own seed - follow our guide **Page 13**

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# Raking up the dirt!

Geoff Hodge tests a line-up of rakes on his allotment to find out which are the best for seedbed preparation



A GOOD garden rake is an essential piece of gardening kit for raking over the soil, breaking up lumps and making a fine seedbed, ready for sowing seeds or laying turf. And there's nothing more satisfying than standing back and looking at your handiwork - a beautifully flat patch of soil, consisting of a fine tilth - well until the cats start digging in it!

Obviously, the larger the rake head, the more soil you can cover, although very large heads, depending on the material they're made from, can make the rake more top heavy.

Those rakes with a flat upper surface on the head can be turned upside down to rake the soil level.

Whenever you buy any gardening tool it's essential that you try it out in store first. Check the weight, balance and the length of the shaft because you should aim to stand as upright as possible; bending puts pressure on your spine and results in backache.

You also want to check that the tool is comfortable to use; smooth handles and handgrips can be important to help prevent blisters and calluses.

**The test**  
I tested the rakes on my allotment. I was looking for one that was comfortable to use and easily produced a fine tilth and a flat seedbed.

I found that rakes with teeth that were thin, curved and/or pointed moved through the soil more easily, but there wasn't much between them. And the longer the teeth, the deeper you can cultivate.

As for raking ability, they were all very good, all rating three stars except the Fiskars QuikFit Universal Rake, which stood out and rated five. This just goes to prove my suggestion of always testing something before you buy it to see how comfortable and suitable it is for you with regards to length, weight, balance and usability. I did have three favourites in the standard rakes - Joseph Bentley, Spear & Jackson and Yeoman, but I could only choose one Best Buy, which was based on weight, length and price.

## GET YOUR WEEKLY FIX!

Stand on a plank when raking large beds to avoid squashing finely-raked soil

### 1 Bulldog Tools Premier Garden Rake

- Length 155cm (61in)
- Weight 1410g
- Handle ash
- Grip none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head alloy steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 lightly curved teeth 7.5cm (3in) long
- Price guide £30.90



### 2 Draper Tools Stainless Steel Garden Rake

- Length 144cm (56¾in)
- Weight 1044g
- Handle ash
- Grip none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head: stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 teeth 6cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £17.75



### 3 Fiskars Power Universal Rake

- Length 161cm (63½in)
- Weight 1290g
- Handle aluminium
- Grips soft plastic at top, plastic in the middle
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head aluminium; flat top; 41cm (16¼in) long; 15 offset teeth, alternating rounded and curved and arrow-tipped 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £32.99



### 4 Gardman Moulton Mill Long Handled Stainless Steel Soil Rake

- Length 148cm (58¼in)
- Weight 812g
- Handle ash
- Grip none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 teeth 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £19.99



### 5 Joseph Bentley Stainless Steel Garden Soil Rake

- Length: 145cm (57in)
- Weight: 956g
- Handle: oak
- Grip: none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 teeth 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £22.99



### 6 Sneeboer Rake

- Length 166cm (65½in)
- Weight 1240g
- Handle ash
- Grip bulb end
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; rounded top; 30cm (12in) long; eight curved teeth 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £62.95
- Available from Harrod Horticultural



### 7 Spear & Jackson E-Series Soil Rake

- Length 159cm (62½in)
- Weight 1095g
- Handle aluminium; cranked handle for ergonomic use
- Grips soft plastic at middle and top
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 lightly curved teeth 6cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £31.99



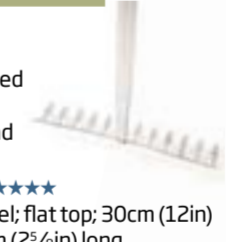
### 8 Wilkinson Sword Stainless Steel Soil Rake

- Length 152cm (60in)
- Weight 1240g
- Handle ash
- Grip none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 29cm (11½in) long; 11 teeth 6cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £27.99



### 9 Yeoman Stainless Steel Soil Rake

- Length 151cm (59½in)
- Weight 812g
- Handle aluminium cranked handle for ergonomic use
- Grips soft foam at top and middle
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 curved teeth 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £19.99



### Suppliers

- Bulldog Tools**  
tel: 01279 401572  
www.bulldogtools.co.uk
- Draper Tools**  
tel: 02380 266355  
www.draper.co.uk
- Fiskars**  
tel: 0115 927 7335  
www.fiskars.com
- Gardena from Husqvarna UK**  
tel: 0844 844 4558  
www.gardena.com
- Gardman**  
tel: 01406 372237  
www.gardman.co.uk
- Supplies direct to garden centres & stores**
- Harrod Horticultural**  
tel: 0845 402 5300

## ↘ Interchangeable tools

TOOLS in my garden shed are interchangeable ones. You buy a single handle that is the right length for you and then the various tool heads that you need. This ensures all your tools are comfortable to use and they don't take up as much room in the shed.

### 10 Fiskars QuikFit Universal Rake

- Length 162cm (63¾in) with 1.5m (5ft) handle
- Weight 784g
- Handle aluminium
- Grips soft plastic at top and middle
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head FyberComp plastic; flat top extension; 41cm (16¼in) long; 12 curved teeth 9.5cm (3¾in) long
- Price guide £14.99
- Handles 72cm (28½in) £14.99; 1.5m (5ft) £18.99



### 12 Wilkinson Sword Space Saver Soil Rake

- Length 148cm (58¼in) with 1.5m handle, which is only 1.43m long
- Weight 905g
- Handle aluminium
- Grip plastic along the top two-thirds of the handle
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head stainless steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 curved teeth 7cm (2¾in) long
- Price guide £16.99
- Handles Wilkinson Sword 3938000W Space Saver Aluminium Handle; 1.2m (4ft) handle £9.99; 1.5m (5ft) handle £11.99



### 11 Gardena Combisystem Rake

- Length 135cm (53¼in) with 1.3m (51in) handle
- Weight 868g
- Handle ash
- Grip none
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head duroplast-coated steel; flat top; 30cm (12in) long; 12 curved teeth 6.5cm (2½in) long
- Price guide £15.99
- Handles 1.3m (51in) £12.99; 1.5m (5ft) £14.99



### 13 Wolf-Garten Multi-change Bow Rake 35cm

- Length 164cm (64½in) with 1.5m aluminium handle, which is only 1.43m long
- Weight 1190g
- Handle aluminium
- Grip plastic along the top two-thirds of the handle
- Comfort & usability: ★★★★★
- Rake head steel; flat top; 36cm (14¼in) long; 14 curved teeth 7cm (2¾in) long
- Price guide £19.99
- Handles wooden from 1m (40in) £14.99 to 1.7m (5ft 8in) £17.99; aluminium from 1.2m (4ft) £8.99 to 1.5m (5ft) £9.99



## Win one of our Best Buy rakes

WE have five of both of the Best Buy rakes to give away! Send your name and address to Garden News Garden Rake Giveaway, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Peterborough PE2 6EA or enter online at www.greatcompetitions.co.uk Closing date is July 12. If you win, you will receive one of the rakes. Please write 'do not contact' if you don't want to be contacted by us or by carefully selected partner organisations.

- www.harrodhorticultural.com
- Joseph Bentley**  
tel: 01905 798666  
www.josephbentley.org.uk
- Supplies direct to garden centres & stores**
- Spear & Jackson**  
tel: 0114 281 4242  
www.spear-and-jackson.com
- Wilkinson Sword from E P Barrus**  
tel: 0845 894 1599  
www.wilkinsonsword-tools.co.uk
- Wolf-Garten from E P Barrus**  
tel: 01869 363636;  
www.wolf-garten.co.uk
- Yeoman**  
tel: 01905 791984  
www.yeomangarden.com
- Supplies direct to garden centres and stores**