

↘ Tried & tested / Garden hoes

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TOP TIP
FOR THE BEST RESULTS, HOE WEEDS ON A SUNNY, BREEZY DAY

A helping hand in the war on weeds

Geoff Hodge tests the best pieces of gardening kit to make those weed problems a thing of the past

There's nothing more satisfying than dealing with weeds when they are young seedlings, so they never get out of control. For me, this means walking the garden regularly with my trusty hoe and stopping them in their tracks. For a hoe to work properly it needs to have a sharp blade. The aim is to cut through the stems of the weeds at or just below ground level - not bludgeon them to death with a blunt blade! Depending on the hoe and the metal it is made from, this may mean that the blade keeps its sharp edge or you have to sharpen the blade with something like a carborundum stone. Whenever you buy any gardening tool, it's essential you try it out first to ensure it's comfortable to use. Check the weight and the length of the shaft

because, if you're hoeing for a long time, make sure you stand upright; bending puts pressure on your spine and results in backache. Long-handled hoes also mean you can easily reach weeds further away. Those with a small or angled head are easier to get in between cultivated plants without damaging them. You should always check that the tool is comfortable to use; handgrips can be important to prevent blisters and calluses. Many of the suppliers in the test also produce a wide range of other hoes. Contact them for full details.

The test
I tested the hoes on weeds on my allotment. I was looking for a hoe that was easy and comfortable to use and easily cut through the weed stems.

I also used them in the beds and borders at home to see how easy they were to manoeuvre between plants. Surprisingly, this was the most difficult tool test I've carried out so far. Nearly all the hoes gave good results and, although very different, each one had its own merits. As a result, I found it very difficult to decide which one should be awarded the Best Buy. Those with wide blades cover more ground more quickly, so cut down weeding time. But those with small blades are easier to manoeuvre between closely spaced plants. I'm not the tallest person in the world, 1.73m (5ft 9in) tall, which is pretty average, but I found that all the hoes were long enough for me to use comfortably. Although the longer the shaft, the further you can reach into beds without having to stretch.

↘ Bulldog Tools Premier Paxton Hoe

Push-pull action with blades front and back
 ●Length 150cm (59in)
 ●Weight 1105g
 ●Hoe head 15x7.5cm (6x3in) alloy steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Ash
 ●Grip None
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £29.80



↘ De Wit Diamond Hoe

Push-pull action with blades front and back.
 ●Length 153cm (60 1/4in)
 ●Weight 995g
 ●Hoe head 19.5x4cm (7 1/2 x 1 1/2 in) burnished carbon steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Ash
 ●Grip Slanted P-grip
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £39.99; available from Crocus



↘ Gardman Carbon Steel Dutch Hoe

Standard Dutch hoe with blade at the front
 ●Length 149.5cm (59in)
 ●Weight 1048g
 ●Hoe head 12.5x6.5cm (5x2 1/2 in) carbon steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Metal cranked handle for ergonomic use
 ●Grip Soft plastic at the top
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £12.99



↘ Haxnicks SpeedHoe

Angled head with blades front, back and sides
 ●Length 170cm (67in)
 ●Weight 1085g
 ●Hoe head 12.5x14cm (5x5 1/2 in) stainless steel
 Sharpness: ★★★★★
 ●Handle Hardwood
 ●Grip None
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £29.99



↘ Joseph Bentley Stainless Steel Hoe

Standard Dutch hoe with narrow blade at the front
 ●Length 156.5cm (61 1/2 in)
 ●Weight 620g
 ●Hoe head 19.5x4cm (7 1/2 x 1 1/2 in) stainless steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Oak
 ●Grip None
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £19.99



↘ Spear & Jackson E-Series Dutch Hoe

Standard Dutch hoe with blade at the front
 ●Length 159cm (62 1/2 in)
 ●Weight 785g
 ●Hoe head 12.5x6.5cm (5x2 1/2 in) stainless steel.
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Aluminium
 ●Grip Soft plastic at middle and top
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £27.49



↘ Yeoman Stainless Steel Long Handle Dutch Hoe

Standard Dutch hoe with blade at the front
 ●Length 161cm (63 1/2 in)
 ●Weight 808g
 ●Hoe head 12.5x6.5cm (5x2 1/2 in) stainless steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Aluminium cranked handle for ergonomic use
 ●Grip Soft foam middle and top
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £19.99



↘ Sneeboer Long Handled Half Moon Hoe

Pull action hoe
 ●Length 168cm (66in)
 ●Weight 977g
 ●Hoe head 16x4cm (6 1/4 x 1 1/2 in) stainless steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Ash
 ●Grip Bulb end
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £32.95; available from Harrod Horticultural



↘ Interchangeable tools

For more than 15 years, most of the tools in my shed have been interchangeable types. That is 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 the right length and they don't take up as much room in the shed

↘ Wilkinson Sword Space Saver Bow Weeder

Pull action hoe
 ●Length 159cm (62 1/2 in) with 1.5m handle
 ●Weight 714g
 ●Hoe head 14x4.5cm (5 1/2 x 1 3/4 in) cold rolled steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Aluminium
 ●Grip Plastic along the top two-thirds of the handle
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £14.99
 ●Handles 1.2m (4ft) £9.99; 1.5m (5ft) £11.99



↘ Wolf-Garten Multi-change Small Push-Pull Weeder

Push-pull action with wavy, serrated blades front and back. Sideguards help prevent damage to nearby plants
 ●Length 177cm (69 3/4 in) with 1.7m handle
 ●Weight 1002g
 ●Hoe head 10x4.5cm (4x1 3/4 in) steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Ash
 ●Grip Soft plastic at top
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £13.99
 ●Handles From 1m (40in) £14.99 to 1.7m (5ft 8in) £17.99



↘ Fiskars Quikfit Push-Pull Weeder

Push-pull action with blades front and back. Sideguards help prevent damage to nearby plants
 ●Length: 172cm (67 3/4 in) with 1.5m handle
 ●Weight: 877g
 ●Hoe head 14.5x3cm (5 3/4 x 1 1/4 in) carbon steel
 ●Sharpness ★★★★★
 ●Handle Aluminium
 ●Grip Soft plastic at middle and top
 ●Comfort ★★★★★
 ●Price guide £19.99
 ●Handles 72cm (28 1/2 in) £14.99; 1.5m (5ft) £18.99



Suppliers

●Bulldog Tools 01279 401572, www.bulldogtools.co.uk
 ●Crocus 08445 572233, www.crocus.co.uk
 ●Fiskars 0115 9277 335, www.fiskars.com
 ●Gardman 01406 372237, www.gardman.co.uk
 Supplies direct to garden centres

and stores.
 ●Harrod Horticultural, 08454 025300, www.harrodhorticultural.co.uk
 ●Haxnicks, 01747 861539, www.haxnicks.co.uk
 ●Joseph Bentley, 01905 798666, www.josephbentley.org.uk
 Supplies direct to garden centres and stores
 ●Spear & Jackson, 0114 281 4242,

www.spear-and-jackson.com
 ●Wilkinson Sword from EP Barrus, 08458 941599, wilkinson-sword@barrus.co.uk
 ●Wolf-Garten from EP Barrus, 01869 363636, www.wolf-garten.co.uk
 ●Yeoman, 01905 791984, www.yeomangarden.com
 Supplies direct to garden centres and stores