



# Tried & tested garden loppers

**Geoff Hodge** tests a range of loppers that are a cut above the rest

**T**HERE are numerous trees, shrubs and other woody plants that need regular pruning to perform well, and many more that need less regular maintenance pruning.

When there are branches that are too thick for secateurs to cope with, you need a good pair of loppers to deal with them properly. Like secateurs, there are two main types of loppers - anvil and bypass - depending on their cutting blade. As bypass are more suited to cutting live wood, these were the types I tested.

Loppers that provide a good, clean cut are essential to ensure the cuts heal quickly and prevent diseases becoming a problem. But it's also important to ensure you buy a pair that are suitable for your personal needs.

Heavyweight loppers may be too heavy to use comfortably for a long time, especially when reaching, so it's important to feel the weight in the store before you make your purchase.

Longer handles allow you to reach further in or

up the plant. And in theory, the longer the handles, the more force you can put into the cut. So, I have to admit I was surprised at which ones came out as Best Buy! These and other loppers have geared or lever-action cutting mechanisms, which makes cutting easier, multiplying the force you use.

## The test

I tested the loppers on a range of different branches, all varying from 3cm to 3.2cm (1¼in) in diameter. This was well within the cutting range of most of the loppers tested, but on the edge of one or two.

I was looking at how cleanly the loppers cut through the wood, and also how easily (how much force was needed to cut through the branches). I was also looking at how comfortable they were to use over a 15-minute period. The presence of plastic or rubber buffers help reduce the amount of shock transferred to the arms and hands via the handles.

## Darlac Super Pro Bypass Lopper £35

Heavy-duty loppers with a maximum cutting diameter of 4.2cm (1½in).

**Length** 71cm (28in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Aluminium handles and steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed a lot of force to cut the branches and some cuts weren't as clean as I would have liked.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Hard plastic grips that were comfortable to hold and large shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Draper Tools 650mm Lever Action Bypass Loppers with Steel Handles £17.99

Reasonably heavy loppers, featuring a compound lever-action cutting mechanism, with maximum cutting diameter of 4cm (1½in).

**Length** 65cm (25½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Coated tubular steel handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

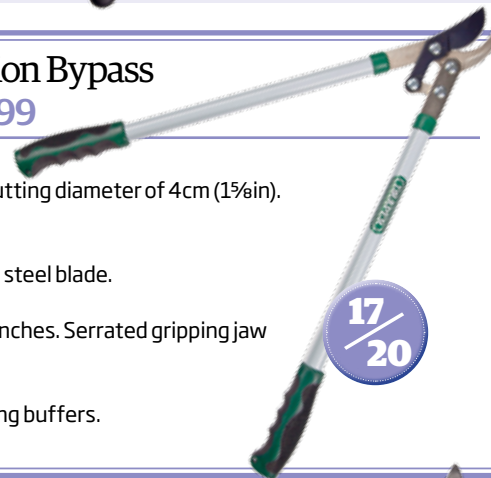
**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal to reasonable force to cut the branches. Serrated gripping jaw held the branches firmly.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Contoured soft plastic grips, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Felco Aluminium Loppers 210A £114.99

Lightweight loppers with maximum cutting diameter of 3.5cm (1¾in).

**Length** 60cm (23½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Aluminium handles and steel blade. Blade adjustment mechanism to ensure fine cut.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed a lot of force to cut the branches.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Soft plastic grips that were comfortable to hold and good shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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**SUPPLIERS:** Some suppliers only sell to garden stores, but you can often buy their products online. **Bulldog Tools**, 01279 401572, [www.bulldogtools.co.uk](http://www.bulldogtools.co.uk) **Darlac**, 01753 547790, [www.darlac.com](http://www.darlac.com) **Draper Tools**, 02380 494333 for stockist details, [www.draper.co.uk](http://www.draper.co.uk) **Felco** from Burton McCall, 0116 234 4611, [www.uk.felco.com](http://www.uk.felco.com) **Fiskars** UK, 0115 927 7335, [www.fiskars.com](http://www.fiskars.com) **Gardena** from Husqvarna UK, 08448 444558, [www.gardena.com/uk](http://www.gardena.com/uk) **Gardman**, 01406 372237, [www.gardman.co.uk](http://www.gardman.co.uk) **Joseph Bentley**, 01905 791984, [www.josephbentley.org.uk](http://www.josephbentley.org.uk) **Spear & Jackson**, 0114 281 4242, [www.spear-and-jackson.com](http://www.spear-and-jackson.com) **Wilkinson Sword** from EP Barris, 08458 941599, [www.wilkinsonsword-tools.co.uk](http://www.wilkinsonsword-tools.co.uk) **Wolf-Garten** from EP Barris, 01869 363636, [www.wolf-garten.co.uk](http://www.wolf-garten.co.uk) **Yeoman**, 01905 791984, [www.yeomangarden.com](http://www.yeomangarden.com)

## Gardena Comfort Pruning Lopper 500BL £25.99

The lightest loppers tested with geared cutting mechanism and maximum cutting diameter of 3.5cm (1¾in). **Length** 50cm (19¾in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Strong plastic handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal force to cut the branches. Large claw jaw helped hold the branches.

One of the shortest loppers tested, so a relatively short reach.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Hard plastic, but comfortable grips, and shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★

**WIN OUR 'BEST BUY' GARDEN LOPPER.** We have six Gardena Comfort Pruning Lopper 500BL Best Buys to give away! Send your name and address to **Garden News Loppers Giveaway**, PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough PE7 2FE or enter online at [www.greatcompetitions.co.uk](http://www.greatcompetitions.co.uk) Closing date is Sep 11. Please write 'do not contact' if you don't want to be contacted by us or by carefully selected partner organisations.



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## Spear & Jackson 27in Bypass Loppers £34.49

Heavy loppers, featuring a compound lever-action cutting mechanism, with maximum cutting diameter of 4.2cm (1½in).

**Length** 68cm (26¾in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal to reasonable force to cut the branches. Serrated gripping jaw held the branches firmly.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Soft plastic grips were comfortable to hold, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Gardman Telescopic Handle Bypass Loppers £24.99

Heavy loppers with maximum cutting diameter of 4cm (1½in). Telescopic handles provide extra length and leverage.

**Length** 63cm to 91cm (24¾-36in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Coated aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed reasonable force to cut the branches. Serrated gripping jaw and branch 'stop' held the branches in place.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Hard rubber grips that were reasonably comfortable, although the triangular shape made them less comfortable with time, and shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Joseph Bentley Bypass Pruner £26.99

Reasonably heavy loppers with maximum cutting diameter of 3cm (1¼in).

**Length** 49cm (19½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Oak-clad handles with stainless steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed reasonable to a lot of force to cut the branches, which tended to slip from the jaws, and some cuts weren't as clean as I would have liked.

**Usability** ★★★★★

The junction between wood and metal and the metal studs were rough and uncomfortable when using, especially over prolonged periods.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Fiskars PowerGear Bypass Lopper L78 £54.99

Reasonably heavy loppers with PowerGear cutting mechanism and maximum cutting diameter of 4.5cm (1¾in).

**Length** 69cm (27¼in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

FiberComp handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal force to cut the branches. Large claw jaw and hook head helped catch and hold the branches.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Soft plastic grips that were comfortable to hold, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Wilkinson Sword General Purpose Geared Bypass Loppers £29.99

Reasonably heavy loppers, with minimally geared cutting mechanism and maximum cutting diameter of 4cm (1½in).

**Length** 75cm (29½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

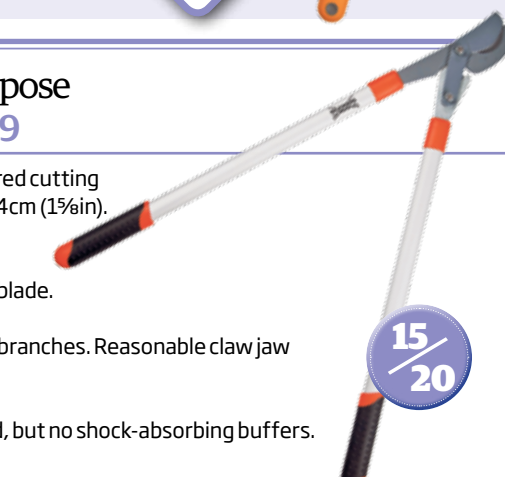
**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal to reasonable force to cut the branches. Reasonable claw jaw helped improve the hold of the branches.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Soft plastic grips that were comfortable to hold, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Wolf-Garten Premium Bypass Lopper £57.99

The heaviest loppers on test, with minimally geared cutting mechanism and maximum cutting diameter of 4.4cm (1¾in).

**Length** 83cm (32½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed a lot of force to cut the branches.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Hard plastic grips that were fairly comfortable to hold and large, soft rubber shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Yeoman Advanced Bypass Geared Loppers £24.99

A very lightweight pruner with geared cutting mechanism and maximum cutting diameter of 3cm (1¼in).

**Length** 55cm (21½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Coated aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed reasonable force to cut the branches, and some cuts weren't as clean as I would have liked. One of the shortest loppers tested, so a relatively short reach.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Soft, comfortable rubber grips, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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## Bulldog Tools Premier Compound Bypass Lopping Shears £20.80

Features a compound lever-action cutting mechanism, with maximum cutting diameter of 4cm (1½in).

**Length** 72cm (28½in)

**Quality** ★★★★★

Coated aluminium handles and non-stick coated steel blade.

**Performance** ★★★★★

Needed minimal to reasonable force to cut the branches. Serrated gripping jaw held the branches firmly.

**Usability** ★★★★★

Lightweight, with contoured soft plastic grips, but no shock-absorbing buffers.

**Value** ★★★★★



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# Your chance to win one of four Toro leaf blowers

Worth £119 each



Autumn is not far away now and if falling leaves are a problem in your garden, one of these powerful Toro Ultra Blowers could be the answer!

We have four of these lightweight, easy to use electric blowers to win and each is three machines in one: it can blow, vacuum and can also shred the leaves down to a fine mulch.

Weighing just 3.3kg, Toro's blowers are significantly lighter than many products on the market and will make light work of shifting all those autumn leaves that collect on lawns and pathways.

The conversion from blower to vacuum mode is simple, requiring no tools and with a large capacity 53-litre shoulder bag you can vacuum for longer before the bag needs emptying. The useful shredding function reduces collection volume as well as promoting quicker breakdown on the compost heap.

The Ultra Blower has a fully-variable speed control (achieving air speeds of up to 350km/hr) and a serrated metal impeller which shreds at a 16-1 ratio for maximum collection capacity. It is backed by a two-year warranty.

Full details of this, and the full Toro

range of consumer garden equipment, together with the location of your nearest dealer can be found on [www.toro.co.uk](http://www.toro.co.uk) or by calling 01279 723444.

## How to enter

**For your chance to be a winner, send in your name and address on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to: Garden News Toro Leaf Blower Giveaway, PO Box 57, Coates, Peterborough, PE7 2FE or enter online at [www.greatcompetitions.co.uk](http://www.greatcompetitions.co.uk)**

The closing date is September 11.

This prize draw is open to residents of the UK only, aged 18 years or over, except employees of Bauer Consumer Media Ltd or anyone else professionally associated with the prize draw/competition. All prizes are non transferable and there are no cash alternatives.

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