

Tried & tested / Pruning saws

A cut above the rest!

Geoff Hodge puts a variety of pruning saws through their paces

Geoff Hodge
Gardening journalist

ANYONE with trees and shrubs in the garden that need serious pruning will have to have a good pruning saw as part of their kit. Although secateurs and loppers will probably be used the most, a saw is essential wherever there are branches that are too large for these tools.

Fixed blade saws usually have the longest blades and so will cut more quickly through the wood - providing you have room to use the

whole length of the blade. Folding saws generally have a shorter blade, so they are more versatile and can manoeuvre into tighter areas - such as between closely spaced branches and so lessen the risk of accidentally damaging them. But the blades are usually shorter than fixed-blade saws so take a few more strokes to cut through the wood. They are also handier as they'll fit into your garden tool carrier and, because the blade is folded into the handle, are safer to carry around and you're less likely to cut yourself.

The best pruning saws will

cut primarily on the back stroke as this allows you to put most power into the cut. And curved blades tend to 'bite' into the wood better, especially if you're pulling down from below the cut.

The test

I tested the saws on a range of trees and shrubs in my garden - good job I had plenty that needed pruning! I was looking at how well they cut the branches, how easily they cut and whether there was any difference in comfort when used for a long time.

I counted the average number of times it took to cut

through the branches. The best ★★★★★ saws took just 22 backward strokes to cut through a 3.5cm (1½in) diameter branch; the worst took 51 strokes!

As for comfort, soft plastic grips were generally more comfortable. I did find that heavily contoured hand grips didn't help with comfort levels, but maybe wouldn't be as bad when wearing gloves.

One of the most essential considerations with folding saws is that the blade locks securely in place. All the folding saws tested locked securely - both when open and shut.

Folding saws

Draper 210mm Folding Pruning Saw ▼

The only saw on test with a metal handle, so excellent quality and very robust and hard wearing. Although the heaviest folding saw, it was very comfortable.

- **Blade length** 21cm (8¼in)
- **Blade type** Straight; high-carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features**
- **Price guide** £10.49

Fiskars Large Xtract Garden Saw ▶

Unlike the other folding saws, the blade of this one slides back into the handle. The blade-locking nut was stiff and fiddly to use.

- **Blade length** 25cm (10in)
- **Blade type** Straight; chrome-plated, high-carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Hard & soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £35.99

Wilkinson Sword Folding Pruning Saw ▶

A good all-round handy folding saw.

- **Blade length** 17cm (6¾in)
- **Blade type** Straight; high-carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Hard plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Replacement blades available
- **Price guide** £24.99

Darlac Folding Sabre Tooth Saw ▲

Excellent cutting ability. Lightweight and very easy to use and manoeuvre in tight spaces.

- **Blade length** 19cm (7½in)
- **Blade type** Straight; chrome-plated, high-carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Bottom hand stop and protector on grip
- **Price guide** £11.99

Spear & Jackson Razorsharp Large Folding Pruning Saw

The longest folding saw on test, and the long handle provides excellent balance and comfort in use. The thumb point allows you to put more pressure into the forward stroke.

- **Blade length** 27cm (10¾in)
- **Blade type** Straight; chrome-plated carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Soft plastic; thumb point
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Bottom hand stop and protector on grip
- **Price guide** £17.49

Burgon & Ball Pruning Saw

The shortest blade in the test, so very versatile and able to get into tight spaces. I found the grip uncomfortable over a long time.

- **Blade length** 15cm (6in)
- **Blade type** Straight; chrome-plated, high-carbon steel; three cutting faces per tooth
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Heavily contoured soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Bottom hand stop and protector on grip
- **Price guide** £22.95

Win our 'best buys'

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



Pruning saw suppliers

Bulldog Tools
01279 401572
www.bulldogtools.co.uk

Burgon & Ball
0114 233 8262
www.burgonandball.com

Darlac
01753 547790
www.darlac.com

Draper Tools
02380 494333
www.draper.co.uk

Felco from Burton McCall
0116 234 4611
www.uk.felco.com

Fiskars Brands UK
0115 9277335
www.fiskars.com

Gardman
01406 372237
www.gardman.co.uk
Supplies direct to garden centres & stores.

Joseph Bentley
01905 791984
www.josephbentley.org.uk
Supplies direct to garden centres & stores

Spear & Jackson
0114 281 4242
www.spear-and-jackson.com

Wilkinson Sword from E P Barrus
08458 941599
www.wilkinsonsword-tools.co.uk

Wolf-Garten from E P Barrus
0845 270 7603
www.wolf-garten.co.uk

Yeoman
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www.yeomangarden.com
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This outstanding dessert variety is so exceptionally sweet that it can be eaten straight from the bush when fully ripe. Heavy crops of large, firm currants - each one up to twice the size of a normal blackcurrant! **1 bare-root £8.49 2 bare-root £16.49 plus a third plant FREE!**

Felco 611 Pruning Saw ▶

Excellent cutting ability. The thumb point allows you to put more pressure into the forward stroke. Only beaten to Best Buy due to the price difference. The sheath is a useful and handy accessory.

- **Blade length** 32cm (12½in)
- **Blade type** Straight; chrome steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Lightly contoured hard plastic; thumb point
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Protective plastic sheath, with detachable belt loop; replacement blades available; bottom hand stop and protector on grip
- **Price guide** £57.99

Yeoman Pruning Saw ▶

- **Blade length** 34cm (13½in)
- **Blade type** Curved; carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Heavily contoured soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £13.49

Wolf-Garten Multi-change Pruning Saw ▶

Part of the Multi-change system. Comes with a 15cm (6in) handle, but especially useful when used with one of the telescopic handles that extend to either 2m, 3m or 4m (6ft 6in-13ft 2in). The perfect choice when cutting high branches and where using ladders becomes a safety issue.

- **Blade length** 37.5cm (14¾in)
- **Blade type** Curved; Swedish steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Long telescopic handles
- **Price guide** £29.99 + Telescopic Handle £26.99-£39.99

Gardman Fixed Handle Pruning Saw

Good cutting ability and reasonably comfortable to use over a long time. The best priced saw in the test.

- **Blade length** 34.5cm (13½in)
- **Blade type** Curved; high-carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Lightly contoured soft plastic
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Other features** Good bottom hand stop and protector on grip
- **Price guide** £9.99

Joseph Bentley Wooden Handle Pruning Saw

A larger, more traditional pruning saw. Produced good cutting results, but due to its size, is less versatile than the others on test.

- **Blade length** 45cm (18in)
- **Blade type** Straight; carbon steel
- **Quality of cut** ★★★★★
- **Grip** Wooden handle
- **Comfort** ★★★★★
- **Price guide** £16.99