

# Garden Products / Soil cultivating tools



## Clod breakers!

Geoff Hodge looks at cultivating tools that make light work of turning clumpy soil into a quality seed-bed

**T**O ENSURE plants grow well, they need good soil to root into. Once you've dug it over, it's important your soil is broken down into a good 'tilth' or fine particles of crumbly soil.

This is especially true when sowing seeds directly into the soil - whether they're vegetables or half-hardy annuals. Even planting young plants into soil that hasn't been worked over well will either slow down the rate they establish and develop or it could even kill them.

That's where a good soil cultivator comes in. There are several styles and designs available, but which ones give the best results?

Whenever you buy any gardening tool it's essential that you try it out first to ensure you find it comfortable to use. Check the weight and the length of the shaft because if you're doing any job for a long time you want to make sure you can stand upright - bending your back will put pressure on your spine and result in backache. You should also check that the tool is comfortable to use; hand grips are important as you don't want to end up with lots of blisters.

### The test

I tested the cultivators on the soil on my allotment which has rather a lot of clay.

I was looking for a tool that was easy and comfortable to use, broke up compacted soil and broke down large clumps quickly and easily, producing a good tilth suitable for sowing.

I'm 5ft 9in in height, which is pretty average, but I found the shorter tools too short to use comfortably over a long time.

### Cultivation key

**A** Dealt well with both compacted soil and large clods to produce a fine tilth; arrow-tipped prongs produce the best tilth.

**B** Dealt well with both compacted soil and large clods to produce a fine tilth.

**C** Initially I had to use it two-handed to deal with compacted soil and large clods, which meant bending, but it soon broke them down and could then be used upright one handed; produced a very fine tilth due to the number of blades.

**D** Dealt well with both compacted soil and large clumps, but as it covers

a small area and has to be lifted and lowered rather than used in a raking action, it takes quite a bit of effort to cover large areas.

### Suppliers

**B&Q** 08456 096688

[www.diy.com](http://www.diy.com)

**Draper Tools** 02380 494333

[www.draper.co.uk](http://www.draper.co.uk)

**Fiskars Brands UK**

01656 655595

[www.fiskars.com](http://www.fiskars.com)

**Gardman** 01406 372237 [www.gardman.co.uk](http://www.gardman.co.uk)

Supplies direct to garden centres & stores

**Homebase** 08450 778888

[www.homebase.co.uk](http://www.homebase.co.uk)

**Joseph Bentley**

01905 798666

[www.josephbentley.org.uk](http://www.josephbentley.org.uk) Supplies

direct to garden centres & stores

**Spear & Jackson**

0114 281 4242

[www.spear-and-jackson.com](http://www.spear-and-jackson.com)

**Wilkinson Sword from E P Barrus**

08458 941599

[wilkinson-sword@barrus.co.uk](mailto:wilkinson-sword@barrus.co.uk)

**Wolf-Garten from E P Barrus**

01869 363636

[www.wolf-garten.co.uk](http://www.wolf-garten.co.uk)

### Fiskars Power 3-Prong Cultivator

£29.99

**Length** 1.57m (613/4in)

**Weight** 704g

**Handle** aluminium

**Grips:** rubber top grip, plastic centre grip

**Tool head** 3 arrow-tipped, polished aluminium prongs

**Cultivation depth** 14cm (5½in)

**Cultivation A**

**Comfort** ★★★★★



ARROW-TIPPED TINES  
REDUCE SOIL TO A  
FINE TILTH

### B&Q Multi Prong Cultivator

£5.98

**Length** 93cm (361/2in)

**Weight** 1.16kg

**Handle** coated steel

**Grip** steel T-bar with

moulded plastic grips

**Tool head** 6 arrow-tipped, carbon steel

prongs

**Cultivation depth**

12.5cm (5in)

**Cultivation D**

**Comfort** ★★★★★

### Homebase Easy Dig

£14.99

**Length** 95cm (371/2in)

**Weight** 1.3kg

**Handle** coated steel

**Grip** steel T-bar with

moulded rubber grips

**Tool head** 5 arrow-tipped, carbon steel

prongs

**Cultivation depth**

17cm (6in)

**Cultivation D**

**Comfort** ★★★★★

### Draper Expert Stainless Steel Cultivator

£16

**Length** 1.52m (60in)

**Weight** 980g

**Handle** lacquered ash

**Tool head** 3 polished

stainless steel prongs

**Cultivation depth** 13.5cm

(5¼in)

**Cultivation B**

**Comfort** ★★★★★

STURDY AND  
COMFORTABLE  
WOODEN HANDLE

STRONG TINES MAKE  
LIGHT WORK OF  
HEAVY SOIL

## GN TOP TIP

Don't try to cultivate clay soil when it's wet. Wait until it dries out and it will be easier to work

## Chrysanthus

Topical tips from Ivor Mace  
Page 17

## Grow Your Own

With Radio 2's allotment expert  
Terry Walton Page 31

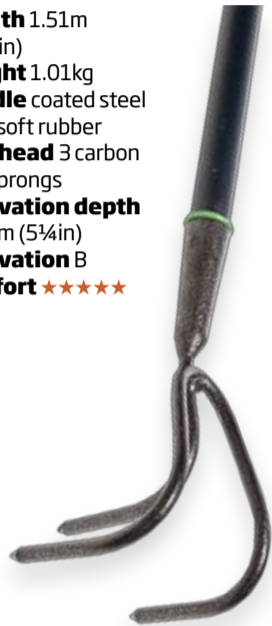


[www.liveforgardening.com](http://www.liveforgardening.com)

### ↻ Gardman Carbon Steel Cultivator

£12.99

**Length** 1.51m (59¼in)  
**Weight** 1.01kg  
**Handle** coated steel  
**Grip** soft rubber  
**Tool head** 3 carbon steel prongs  
**Cultivation depth** 13.5cm (5¼in)  
**Cultivation B**  
**Comfort** ★★★★★



### ↻ Homebase 3-Prong Cultivator

£14.99

**Length** 1.39m (54¾in)  
**Weight** 1.11kg  
**Handle** wood  
**Grip** soft plastic  
**Tool head** 3 carbon steel prongs  
**Cultivation depth** 14cm (5½in)  
**Cultivation B**  
**Comfort** ★★★★★



### ↻ Spear & Jackson Elements 3-Prong Cultivator

£12.99

**Length** 1.6m (63in)  
**Weight** 1.07kg  
**Handle** lacquered ash  
**Grip** soft rubber  
**Tool head** 3 epoxy coated, carbon steel prongs  
**Cultivation depth** 14cm (5½in)  
**Cultivation B**  
**Comfort** ★★★★★



### ↻ Joseph Bentley Long Handle Cultivator

£19.99

**Length** 1.55m (61in)  
**Weight** 1.09kg  
**Handle** contoured oak  
**Tool head** 3 arrow-tipped, polished stainless steel prongs  
**Cultivation depth** 10cm (4in)  
**Cultivation A**  
**Comfort** ★★★★★



### ↻ Gardman Carbon Steel Rotating Cultivator

£29.99

**Length** 1.17m (46in)  
**Weight** 1.16kg  
**Handle** coated steel  
**Grip** soft rubber  
**Tool head** 6 rotating eight-pronged blades, which can be removed in pairs to change the cultivation configuration  
**Cultivation depth** 5.5cm (2¼in)  
**Cultivation C**  
**Comfort** ★★★★★



## ↻ 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.

I tested the following systems; Gardena also produces an interchangeable system, but the company is currently reviewing the range so it wasn't available for testing.

### ↻ Wilkinson Sword Space Saver Click System

↻ **Lightweight aluminium handles and cold rolled steel tool heads. Simple 'snap on' design**

**Handles** small (35cm/14in) £5.99; 1.2m (4ft) £9.99; 1.5m (5ft) £11.99  
**Tool heads include** Soil Cultivator £17.99; Soil Grubber £9.99; Clod Breaker £9.99; Soil Crumbler £9.99



### ↻ Wolf-Garten Multi-change System

↻ **Wooden or aluminium handles of different lengths to suit your height. Simple 'snap on' design**

**Handles** from 32cm (12½in) £4.99 to 1.7m (5ft8in) £15.99  
**Tool heads include** Grubber £13.99; CultiWeeder £19.99; Cultivator £27.99; Soil Miller £39.99



# WIN a Honda lawnmower



WORTH  
£530

↻ HONDA'S robust HRS536 SDE lawnmower will quickly and efficiently cut areas of rough or long grass, making it ideal for use in orchards and around trees, grass verges and beside driveways.

Now Honda has teamed up with Garden News to offer one lucky reader the chance to win one of these first class lawnmowers worth £530. The HRS536 SDE is easy to manoeuvre because of its compact design and lightweight but durable steel deck.

It offers a 53cm (21in) wide cut and a mulching capability with the advantage of side-discharge to keep cuttings away from the operator and ensure better grass flow.

There is a choice of six cutting heights, ranging from 24mm to 87mm (1-3in), to deal with a wide range of cuts and conditions.

The ultra-reliable engine has a low running noise, while the automatic decompressor ensures an easy start. The HRS536 SDE comes with a three-year domestic warranty.

↻ **This lawnmower is available in limited numbers through Honda's specialist Lawn & Garden dealer network. Use the dealer search button on the website at [www.honda.co.uk/garden](http://www.honda.co.uk/garden) or call 01753 590545.**

#### Terms and conditions

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 draws/competitions. All prizes are non transferable and there are no cash alternatives. Full terms and conditions are available online at [www.liveforgardening.com](http://www.liveforgardening.com)

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#### How to enter

We have one Honda HRS536 SDE lawnmower, worth £530, to give away. 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 Honda 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 14.