

1. Background

The greatest hazards posed by hand tools are misuse, use of the wrong tool for the job and improper maintenance. This guide helps our volunteers recognise the hazards associated with the different types of tools and the precautions required to prevent harm. Beautiful Perth is responsible for buying and maintaining the correct tools & equipment, but it is the responsibility of volunteers to use them properly and to inform a Trustee if there are any problems with the tools so they can take appropriate action.

2. General precautions

Handles

Handles are to be of good quality plastic or well-seasoned durable hardwood and firmly fixed. They are to be regularly checked for splits or cracks and wedged, where necessary to keep them tight.

Cleanliness

Grease and dirt to be regularly removed from all tools, moving or adjustable parts to be lightly oiled

Cutting Edges

Cutting edges are to be sharp to allow accurate work and to avoid the hazards caused by excessive pressure.

Repair and Storage

All tools are to be regularly checked. They are to be thoroughly examined prior to storage and, if worn or damaged, repaired or replaced. When not in use, tools are to be stored in boxes or racked.

Selection

Every tool has its proper application. The correct type, size and weight tool is to be selected for the job.

Safety checks should be carried out before and after each use, and tools wiped clean before storing away.

Working with children

Small sized tools will be provided for children under 12. All children must be supervised and should not use tools that are too large for them to handle safely.

3. Individual Tools

Spades/Shovels/Forks etc

Safety check: handle firm, joint of shaft and blade firm, blade straight. Stout footwear to be worn.

Carrying: hand near pivot point, blade forward, by side.

Safe working area: other people to be one spade length away.

Use: Foot to be used to push blade, not chopping action in hands, ball of foot to be used.

Storage: Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Spade to be left lying with blade angled down. Store in shed when job is finished.

Mel/Sledgehammer/Postdriver

Selection: These tools are heavy and must be used with care. The correct weight of tool should be used, within the capabilities of the user, yet heavy enough to facilitate ease of use. Post drivers should be used wherever suitable.

Carrying: the tool should be carried at the operative's side, with the head end being toward the front of the user. The tool should be dropped to the side if the user loses their footing.

Safety check: Users should check before, during and after use that the hammer end is firmly attached to the tool. DO NOT USE if the head is loose, or if there is damage to head or shaft. Report such faults to a Trustee immediately; they will get the tool repaired or replaced.

Safe Use: ensure neither the back nor the downswing can cause accidental injury to a third party. No third party should be used to stabilise an object prior to striking with a lump hammer, sledge hammer or mel.

Storage: Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Mattock

Safety check: shaft free from splits, securely set into head, head not damaged or cracked. Stout boots to be worn.

Carrying: hand near pivot point, head of mattock forward, by side.

Safe use: working area: other people to be two shaft lengths away. Firm stance taken with legs apart. Head of mattock not to be raised above head height. Roots to be cut to be at parallel to arms (running to and away from user, not across). For ground clearance not to be raised above waist height.

Storage: Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Two-Handed Axe

Safety check: shaft free from splits, securely set into head, head not damaged or cracked, stout boots to be worn.

Carrying: hand near pivot point, head of axe forward, by side.

Safe use: other people to be two shaft lengths away. Firm stance with legs apart. Head of axe not to be raised above head height. Roots to be cut to be perpendicular to arms, (running from side to side of user). Use weight of head rather than muscular power to deliver force of blow.

Storage: Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Bowsaws

Safety check: cut wood for sharpness and visual check for damage to teeth. Glove must be worn on wood-holding hand. Guard in place except when cutting. Wood being sawn to be braced (with gloved hand.) During use the blade should not be forced as this risks kick-back and injury.

Carrying: guard in place, blade nearest to ground, in hand, by side.

Safe use: other people at distance (two branch lengths from branch being cut), back turned to bent branches, stable stance, adult in attendance. 'Saw-slip' 'downhill;' = backward saw motions till depth of blade in cut, hand 'uphill' from cut – through saw if necessary. Gloved hand to be thumb distance from cut. Avoid cutting wood in compression, which can lead to entrapment of blade.

Storage: At end of task wipe with oily rag or spray with WD 40 before storage. Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Rip Saw

Safe use: Always hold scabbard with your free hand, when sheathing or unsheathing saw. Keep blade and teeth pointing down and in front of you when using saw, so that you can see it at all times. Never place or drop the saw on the ground, it could land with the teeth facing upwards.

Storage: leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Loppers

Safety check: mechanism not loose, no damage to blades, sharpness of blade (careful use of finger, test on wood.) At end of task wipe with oily rag before storage.

Carrying: horizontally by side, hand near pivot point, on arm nearest ground, blade end forward. No gloves.

Safe Use: other people at distance (two branch lengths from branch being cut), back turned to bent branches, stable stance. Only use on wood to thumb thickness of user. Do not twist or wrestle with branch being cut – leave branch if loppers will not cut.

Storage: Leave at designated point when set aside from use. At end of task wipe with oily rag before storage.

Wheelbarrow

Safety check: tyre inflated, wheel running smoothly, handles secure, frame straight and joints secure.

Safe use: load to be evenly distributed, with some weighting to the wheel. Do not exceed 40kg. When lifting handles, bend knees and keep back straight wheel.

Barrow to be parked on level surface or otherwise made secure.

Storage: Not to be left where it forms an obstacle to pedestrian or other movement in the area. Leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store carefully in shed when job is complete.

Hammers

Safety check: firm attachment of the head to the handle, no splinters, cracks, loose wrapping or other defects in the handle.

Safe use: get a firm grip on the handle to ensure it doesn't fly out of your hand. Hold the hammer at the end of the handle. Hit your surface squarely with the hammer. Use your whole arm and elbow. Work in a natural position. Check before you swing. Keep your workspace clear of other objects and check that nobody is standing behind you or too near you when you use the hammer.

Storage: leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Screwdrivers

Safety check: check that handle is not loose or cracked/split.

Safe use: screwdrivers are not to be used as chisels, drifts or wedges. The screwdriver head is to be the correct size for the screw and its tip is to fit the slot. The work is to be held firmly and a steady, even pressure, exerted on the screw. Do not hammer screwdriver handles cause the handle to split. If the handle is designed for use with a rubber grip the grip must be fitted. Do not carry in pockets as this can cause serious puncture wounds.

Storage: leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Knives/Scythes/Billhooks, etc

Safety check: These tools are potentially very dangerous. They should be maintained sharp; dull tools are more likely to cause injury due to the operator needing to exert more force to compensate for blunt blades. The correct tool is to be selected for the task.

Safe use: check for any obstruction in the cutting area and be alert for members of the public or third parties being close. When not in use blades are to be kept sheathed, or retracted or placed in slotted racks. Stanley blades are only to be used in the correct holders. Any defective tools and equipment to be discarded and reported immediately to a Trustee.

Storage: leave at designated point when set aside from use. Store in shed when job is finished.

Secateurs

Safe use: Always lock and make sure the jaws are locked and the spring (pupa) is in place, when returning secateurs to holster. Wipe clean before storing.