

Gardeners' Toolbox:

What would a painter be without his brushes and oils? Could a doctor perform surgery without his instruments? The same could be said for a budding landscaper — his lawn or garden is much easier to care for if the right tools were employed. Plus, it might prove to be less strenuous work as well.

Prior to making any landscaping plans, make an assessment of your tool portfolio. Make note of anything you might need to accomplish goals outdoors. If you need help compiling your list, here are some good items to include:

1. Trowel: A strong, quality trowel will make easy work of overturning soil and getting to the root of weeds.

2. Shovel: There are many shovels out there, but finding one that fits your stature will make work much easier. Look for a shovel with a handle that reaches your shoulders, the width of the bar fitting comfortably in your hands. Forged or stainless steel will last longer, particularly ones with an all-in-one steel handle and head shovel.

3. Wheelbarrow: This garden workhorse makes it much easier to transport heavy materials and equipment than by hand. Also, easily cart away lawn clippings, rocks and soil.

4. Spade: A sharp-edged spade will make it easier to divide perennials. Forged steel is not rustproof but will hold up better against hard objects like rocks under the soil.

5. Pruners: Pruning is a must in every garden. Removing dead and diseased plant parts as well as cutting back overgrowth will ensure healthier plants and shrubbery. A pruner is a precise, clean cutting tool. Ergonomic and mechanically assisted models allow you to cut through thick branches with minimal strain on your hands.

6. Hoe: A hoe, also known as a scuffle hoe, allows you to cultivate, weed and mix as you push and pull the soil.

7. Cultivator: These come in many styles but essentially feature pronged, claw-like

Please see ASSESS, page 20

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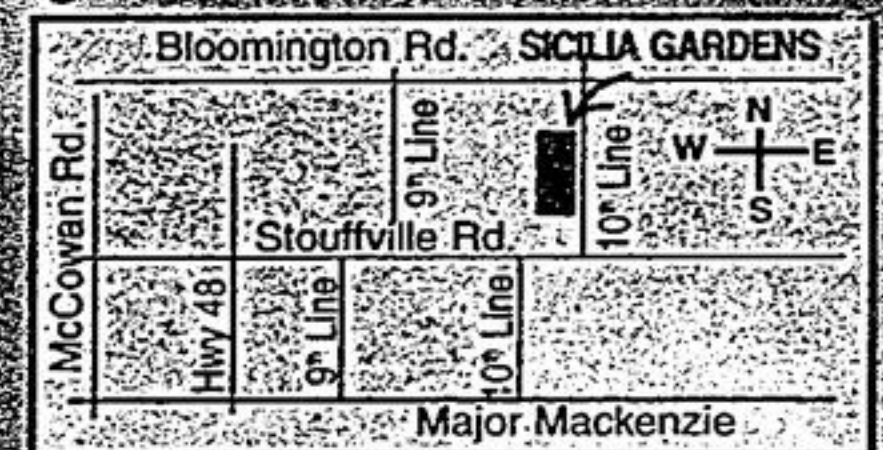
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