**Tool Sharpening w/Joe Ginther – 10-18-16 @ Derwood Demo Garden**

Points to remember about sharpening our garden tools [the *long* short version]

Today, Joe Ginther was kind enough to share with us some of his knowledge of how to sharpen our garden tools. I took a few notes to help me remember the gist of it. Hopefully they will help the many of you that were also in attendance of our “10:00 Learning” session. We used a lot of the tools from the shed for our educational purposes, so those of you that use them, will appreciate their new look, feel and efficiency.

For all tools, sand paper is one way to get any rust off of the metal parts, and to smooth the wooden parts if they’ve roughened with age. Joe had #80 grit, and “Garnet” sand paper, steel wool is also good, and sometimes a wire brush is the best start, if particularly rusty)

To help preserve the wooden parts of a tool, Joe applies with a rag, a mixture of 2 parts “Boiled” Linseed Oil to 1 part Turpentine after he has sanded the wood smooth rub the mixture into the wood. The boiled aspect of the linseed oil helps reduce stickiness and promotes faster drying. After letting the tool(s) sit for twenty minutes (give or take a bit), then rub off any excess mixture with a cloth.

For sharpening blades of larger tools, use a metal file (from local hardware stores/Home Depot). Some even are coarse on one side and slightly smother on the other side. The important thing to remember about files is only stroke it against the tool in *one* direction. (A back and forth motion will ruin the file.) For each tool, you want to study how the blade was sharpened initially, and repeat that angle – many tools are at a 20 degree “beveled” angle. Remember, think what 90’ looks like, cut that in half and you get what a 45’ angle looks like, and then mentally cut *that* in half again and you have well….about a 20 degree angle! Easy, right? For shovels and trowels and such, you only want to sharpen the “digging” edge of the tool—aka: the underneath part as you dig. The other (inside) doesn’t need to be sharpened.

For an extremely curved blade, such as a sickle, you would use a carborundum\* stone – more modernly called a silicon or Norton Crystolon Stone, soaked in water as it’s lubricant. One that is teardropped shape is especially good for inside of the sickle’s curved blade.

For smaller blades like pruners and loppers, you may like using a sharpening stone better, and if available an “India Stone”, which Joe had – it is ¼” x ¼” x 4” long and very easy to maneuver the small parts in hand tools. As with the files, you hold the sharpening stone usually at the 20’ angle against the beveled side of the tool. Always with a sharpening stone, you need to use a lubricant. Coarse stones can use water (or spit, if more handy, *and* not someone else’s stone), or oil –- motor oil or WD-40 are both fine. There are two sharpening motions you can use the sharpening stone, either single stroke away from you, as you slide along the blade; or small circular motions, gradually moving along the length of the stone. A good clue your getting it is to see the shiny beveled edge turning up as you go along. Remember that 20’ angle!

If there is a flat side (such as with pruners and loppers), it is good to run the file parallel to the flat side after you’ve honed the beveled side – He did not say this but I think this is to be sure there are no metal shavings hanging out (aka: burrs) – it sort of cleans up the edge.

After you’ve sharpened it, buff all the metal parts w/an oiled rag—or spray a little WD-40 (**W**ater **D**isplacement -**40**th attempt –that was the attempt that actually worked, hence the name.)

Some tools, such as lawn edgers and anvils may have two beveled edges, so in that case it is ok to work that 20’ angle on both sides.

Finally, make sure there is no “wobble” to the tool, if there is, check for any nuts that may be tightened, using two wrenches twisted against each other, to assure the blades cross each other nice and will perform a clean cut.

Enjoy the process, and the prospects of clean sharp tools next year, and guilt free gardening, knowing you’ve taken care of your best helpers!

Respectfully submitted, please correct any possible errors, Betsy Taylor

\*Lily and Bill –Joe used a different word here, but I looked it up on line and found that this word is the name given to the stone you use with water as the lubricant. He used a word that sounded like “conundrum”.

[The *Shorter* Short version: ]

Today, Joe Ginther was kind in sharing with us some of his knowledge of how to sharpen our garden tools. I took a few notes to help me remember the gist of it. Hopefully they will help jog the memory for those that were also in attendance of the 10:am learning session. We used a lot of the tools from the shed for our educational purposes, so anyone using them soon, will appreciate their new look, feel and efficiency.

Key take away points:

20’ Sharpening angle easily remembered with the “90/45/20 rule”. We each can visualize a 90’ angle, cut that in half = 45; cut the 45’ angle in half again = about 20’!

Many tools have a 20’ angle, follow what was originally there – if visible still. Goal is for tool to be “shiny” along that whole edge when it is sharp.

Back of pruner/lopper blades are often flat – a few swipes w/sharpening tool parallel to blade will reinforce the flat part removing any burs you may have created from the other side. If using an anvil pruner, just sharpen the cutting part, not the bottom.

Files: use for larger tools; move file in one direction only (e.g. away from you) as you slide it along the tool’s blade beveled edge. No lubricant required. Move across blade kind of like a honing tool for kitchen knives.

Stones: used especially w/smaller hand tools, pruners & loppers. Oil or water lubricant required. ¼” square x 4” long India Stone is really good.

Get rust off w/sandpaper --80 grit or Garnet, or steel wool, and/or wire brush.

For wooden parts, rub in mixture of 2 parts “Boiled” Linseed Oil to 1 part Turpentine, let sit approximately 15-30 minutes and buff off.

Check for wobbliness – tighten any nuts/screws as possible to reinforce blades crossing properly. Using two wrenches works well for this task.

Local hardware stores often have stones and files, Home Depot is reported to have them too. Whites Hardware (Ga Ave and Norbeck Rd) has replacement tool handles.

Enjoy the process, and the prospects of clean sharp tools next year, and guilt free gardening, knowing you’ve taken care of your best helpers!

Respectfully submitted, please correct any possible errors, Betsy Taylor