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## Gardening

By Brian Bellmont

Six must have earth-friendly garden tools

From weeding to watering, when it comes to summertime lawn and garden maintenance, the tools you use can make all the difference. With the right gear in your garage or tool shed, taking care of your yard and garden can be nearly as stress-free as a glass of cold lemonade on a lazy summer afternoon.

It's no secret that well-designed tools can help cut down on the time and effort it takes to tackle outdoor chores while reducing strain on your body.

But with thousands of gadgets and gizmos on store shelves, how do you choose the right ones? "Talk to your friends and neighbors with yards you admire and ask them what tools they use," says Dan Wright, president of lawn and garden tool manufacturer Yard Butler, a division of Lewis Lifetime Tools. "Stick to the basics, and choose well-made, durable tools that allow you to avoid chemicals, air pollution or wasting resources."

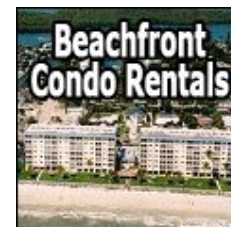
According to Wright, here are six must-have - and earth-friendly - tools to ensure quick and easy summer yard maintenance.

- Lawn mower: Manual reel mowers have made a strong comeback lately.

Better designs make them much easier to use than when you were getting paid 50 cents a yard to mow your neighbor's lawn. With easy height adjustability and blade maintenance, these can be a great - and green - choice for smaller yards.

- Weeder: Weeding consistently tops people's least-favorite chore lists. And no wonder - it can be dirty, backbreaking work, especially if you're trying to avoid overusing chemicals in your yard. But tools have come a long way from the old-fashioned weeding forks that forced you to get down on your hands and knees and gouge at the turf. The innovative rocket weeder, for instance, lets you pull weeds without bending over. The tool grabs the weed without breaking off the roots, while its ergonomic, easy-on-the-back handle does most of the work by rocking the weed out of the ground.

- Edger: A manicured edge along a sidewalk or driveway is an attractive finishing touch for any lawn. One easy option is to use a walk-behind tool that edges as you walk, slicing off the ragged edge along sidewalks or driveways. Look for an edger that centers your weight over the cutting edge, which makes edging as easy as taking a step. These stand-up tools can also be used to dig trenches and install landscaping edging for a



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finished look around gardens.

- **Aerator:** Aerating is an often-overlooked - but very important - summer maintenance task. Forget the walk-around spiked shoes. For professional results, you need to remove actual cores of dirt. Removing plugs of soil helps reduce compaction and allows water, air and fertilizer to get down to the soil, which strengthens the grass plant's root structure. A little bit of aerating goes a long way. Consider using a manual aerating tool that removes plugs from the turf while you step.

- **Root irrigator:** Dehydration is an all-too-common cause of tree damage, but it's easily preventable. A deep root irrigator is an efficient way to deliver water directly to the root zone. The easy-to-use tool hooks up to your hose and encourages beneficial deep root growth, which helps plants withstand

periods of drought. Just as important, it saves water by eliminating wasteful runoff and evaporation because it delivers moisture directly to the roots.

- **Tiller:** When you're planting a garden, breaking through hard-packed soil can be a difficult task. To cut down on the effort, invest in a good-quality stand-up tiller with teeth that are sturdy enough to twist into the ground and a step-plate that lets you deliver enough force to penetrate the packed soil.

Tillers can also blend in fertilizers and mulches, cultivate around shrubs or bushes and dig holes.

With the right tools for the job, you can cultivate a healthy, beautiful yard and garden that'll have your neighbors turning green with envy. For more information about specialty tools, visit [www.YardButlerStore.com](http://www.YardButlerStore.com).



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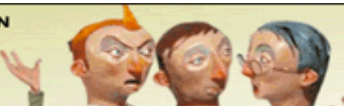



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