

Frugal Gardening

When it comes to your garden, you need more than just plants to keep it alive. You also need the tools to keep the garden healthy and vibrant. To take care of your garden you also need to keep your tools safe. To do that you should get a shed from [Capital Construction](#) to keep all of your tools safe from the weather. I could survive with the first five tools if I needed to be really frugal, but I expanded my list to include the last five that most people would find essential:

Shovel: You'll need a shovel and a regular round end shovel is the choice if you can only have one. There are other varieties, but a generic round end will work for most tasks: moving dirt, digging holes for new plants and dividing large plants to name just a few. There is a lot of dirt that needs to be moved when you have a garden making the shovel the number one tool on the list.

Hoe: Again, there are many different kinds of hoes to choose from and if you can only get one, opt for a basic model. While there are lots of the fancy kinds of hoes, anything with moving parts doesn't belong on a "have to have" list. My favorite is a forked hoe. This seems to be the easiest to maneuver in and around existing plants in my opinion.

Bucket: You don't need anything fancy here, but you do need a bucket. A free plastic bucket will work fine for steeping compost "tea", mixing potting soil, soaking the roots of a free plant – the list of uses are almost as long as my favorite plant list!

Hose: You will need to get water to whatever you plant and that will determine the length or number of hoses you need. This is one area where it can be worthwhile to pay a bit more for a quality hose since I have found the cheaper ones I have had over the years just didn't pass muster. You want a hose

that doesn't kink up and one that will "behave" when it's coiled up.

Spade & Cultivator: If you are planning on any container gardening, a hand held spade and a cultivator (or something similar) are a necessity. You could substitute these with kitchen type serving utensils like large serving spoons and a fork found at a thrift store if you're in a big pinch. You'll probably need to bend the handles to make them function as garden tools, but they will do the job.

Those are the essential tools you'll need. The next 5 you could probably get by with if it was absolutely necessary, but these are still well worth the investment if given a choice:

Wheelbarrow: A wheelbarrow comes in extremely handy to haul compost, trimmings, soil, etc. You could substitute a wheelbarrow with a tarp which might be cheaper to begin with, but it will wear out with repeated use. You could also use a free 5 gallon bucket if you are working in a small yard, patio or deck area.

Watering Can: This device is especially nice when mixing fertilizers and other such things so you can place the mixture exactly where you want it. Buckets work, but it's hard to regulate how much you're pouring that way.

Markers: If you want to know what you have planted and where it is, you'll need to mark where you planted everything. There are many plant/row markers are on the market, but the most frugal ones I've come across are plastic knives. A big box of these are fairly inexpensive, and if you're really frugal, collect them from the next potluck you attend. They can last a couple seasons at a minimum and much longer if you're careful. They come with a nice flat surface to write on, the rain won't hurt them and you're not out a ton of money if they get lost in the garden or accidentally they end up in the compost pile.

Garden Stakes: You can buy these at any garden center or you

can be creative and come up with frugal alternatives. I have several sizes, small (18") to large (5'). They are convenient to mark rows or individual plants, stake up plants that require support or you can use several in a row to string twine between, creating a support for plants like sweet peas.

A Tarp: I know I mentioned this as a substitute for the wheelbarrow, but it has enough uses in a garden that I thought it deserved its own number. I'll use it if I'm digging a hole to plant a large bush or tree so that the dirt that comes out of the hole is not put on the lawn or on top of other plants in the garden. It's also a great way to move a large bush or tree once you get it dug up. Spreading a tarp out on a picnic table would make a great temporary planting area and it helps keep the mess contained.

Happy Gardening, no matter what size & scope your corner of the world is.