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THE GOODS DENISE COWIE

At handhelpers.com, Toby Rabold offers tools that help her continue gardening despite repetitive-strain injuries.

She says she can use everything offered on her Web site. "And without these tools, I couldn't garden without damaging myself further."

(Prices are from HandHelpers; they do not include shipping and handling.)

Get a grip

The Easi-Grip trowel from Peta (U.K.) Ltd. was the first ergonomic tool Rabold bought after undergoing carpal-tunnel surgery. She discovered that its pistol grip forced her to keep her wrist in a neutral position. Optional arm cuffs also are available for Easi-Grip tools.

Vertex Tools produces a line of garden tools called WristSavers that feature built-in cuffs that keep the wrist straight and take the pressure off. I tried these tools a couple of years back, when they were called Earth Bud-Eze, and found them helpful. They've had a design update and a name change, but the idea's the same.

Easi-Grip trowel, \$9.95; set of trowel, fork and cultivator, \$24.95; available at www.handhelpers.com or call 1-888-632-7091; visit www.peta-uk.com/usashop/ for more information and other retailers. WristSaver hand tools, \$8.95 each, or \$23.95 for a set of V-hoe, cultivator and trowel; available at www.handhelpers.com or www.2vertex.com.

Weeding's a breeze

The Telesco-Weeder from Garden Bandit is Rabold's favorite tool right now - "I don't dread weeding any more," she says. The telescoping weeder is lightweight, and the length of its handle can be adjusted according to the height of the user, so you don't have to stoop or bend to grab those pesky weeds.

The handle extends from about 35 inches to 61 inches, and the weeding end has a closed-loop design with a high-tensile stainless-steel blade designed to aerate the soil, too.

Rabold also likes the UpRoot Weeder from Fiskars, another lightweight tool that lets you weed without bending over. It has stainless-steel blades that grab onto a weed's roots; step on the lever and the weed is out.

Telesco-Weeder, \$21.95 at www.handhelpers.com or (1-888-632-7091); also available at www.gardenbandit.com. UpRoot Weeder, \$29.95, available at HandHelpers or through www.fiskars.com (click on "Garden.")

Raking it in

Rabold likes longer-reach tools "because you don't have to bend, and they are easier on your hands." Fiskars' eight-inch Shrub Rake is lightweight and has a teardrop-shaped aluminum shaft that is easy to grip. "It reduces back fatigue," she says. "I use it all the time."

Shrub Rake, \$11.95, available at www.handhelpers.com (1-888-632-7091) or through www.fiskars.com.

If the glove fits

First, Hillerich & Bradsby introduced Bionic Gardening Gloves, designed by a hand surgeon, which have pads for thumb, fingers and palm to reduce fatigue and help prevent blisters and calluses. They recently won an "Ease-of-Use Commendation" from the Arthritis Foundation.

Now, the glove-making division of the company (creator of the Louisville Slugger baseball bat) offers Bionic Pro-Work Gloves. Made from calf leather, and with most of the attributes of the gardening gloves, the new work gloves also feature a substance called Composite Tough-Ex on fingertips and palm, for durability. These are for tough jobs in the garden.

Bionic Pro-Work Gloves, \$44.95 (\$40 if ordered by June 16 for Father's Day); Bionic Gardening Gloves, \$39.95; both at www.handhelpers.com (1-888-632-7091) or www.bionicgloves.com (or call 1-800-282-2287 and press 6).

Power pruning

PowerGear pruning tools from Fiskars are designed to take the resistance out of trimming shrubs and rose bushes. The PowerGear Bypass Pruner (available this year in a smaller size for smaller hands) is designed to maximize hand strength, giving you as much as 35 percent more cutting power, the manufacturer says. The 15-inch PowerGear Anvil Lopper is billed as making pruning easier for those with less hand and arm strength. Both are lightweight.

PowerGear Bypass Pruner, \$19.95; PowerGear Anvil Lopper, \$17.95, available at www.handhelpers.com (1-888-632-7091) or www.fiskars.com.

Rockin' in the garden

For when you just have to sit down on the job, Vertex Tools has the Deluxe Garden Rocker Seat. Its curved base allows a full range of motion, so you can move in any direction while sitting or kneeling.

"I've tried kneeling pads, garden bucket seats, bending, and sitting," Rabold says, "and this rocker is it, as far as sitting and gardening." It reduces the strain on the lower back and knees, she says, and the seat height is adjustable. Comes with a cushioned seat cover that has four saddle pockets for hand tools.

Deluxe Garden Rocker, \$44.95 including cushioned cover, available at www.handhelpers.com (1-888-632-7091) or www.2vertex.com.