

Tools and Safety Talk Guidance

Overview

1). Introduction

These notes are intended as an aid to those leading tasks regarding the 'Tools Talk' which may be delivered at the start of the task. A 'Tools Talk' is an essential part of any task involving new or inexperienced volunteers but also acts as a useful reminder to even the most experienced.

The content of the actual talk will, of course, vary according to the task and should be delivered with the risk assessment in mind, for which it is **not** a replacement.

2). General

- When retrieving tools from tool bag, beware of tools with unguarded blades, e.g., bowsaws, billhooks, etc.
- Before using, check the tool is in good condition:
 - Saw blades should be straight and not buckled.
 - Wood handles should not be split, have splinters, or in any other way be damaged, and the 'business end' secure and not loose.
 - Bladed tools should be sharp and without significant signs of wear and tear.
 - Any tool not in good condition should be reported to the task leader and not used.
- When carrying tools:
 - Carry at side, blades down and pointing forwards, or use tool bags.
 - When carrying long handled tools, be aware of those in front and behind you.
 - If you trip, release tools, attempting, if possible, to throw tools to one side.
 - Do not overload tool bags.
 - Only carry what you can comfortably manage. Do not overload yourself.
 - **Do not** carry tools or tool bags on your shoulders.
 - Be extra cautious when crossing roads.
- Safe working distances, i.e., the safe distance between you and others:
 - When using swing tools such as slashers, at least twice the combined length of your arm and the tool that you are using.
 - When felling trees, at least twice the height of the tree being felled.
 - Be aware of those around you and stop working if someone comes too close.
 - If you need to gain the attention of someone using a slasher, etc. or felling, call out, do not approach.
- When using swinging tools (slashers, lump hammers, etc.):
 - Do **not** wear gloves on the hand gripping the tool.
 - Gloves may be acceptable in very exceptional circumstances, see individual tools, but never in wet conditions, and safe working distances must be increased to compensate.
- Tools not in use:
 - Should be laid to one side on the ground, clearly visible but not causing a trip hazard, or returned (to the tool bag, etc.)
 - Do **not** hang tools in trees.

3). Hazards

- General hazards:
 - Dogs mess
 - Broken glass and other debris

- Trip hazards
- Blackthorn
- Etc.
- Seasonal hazards:
 - Ticks
 - Wasp nests
 - Adders
 - Plant sap (allergic reactions)
 - Etc.
- Refer to Risk Assessment for hazards which may be specific to task.

4). The task

- Ensure all volunteers are familiar with the tools needed for the task and their correct use.
- For tasks such as tree felling and hedgelaying, pair inexperienced with experienced volunteers.
- Tree felling specifics:
 - Safe working distances.
 - Determining direction of fall.
 - Avoiding 'hang-ups'.
 - Escape routes.
 - Use of and correct cutting of bird month.
 - Never stand immediately in front of **or behind**, a tree being felled. Kick-back.
- Resolving 'hang-ups'.

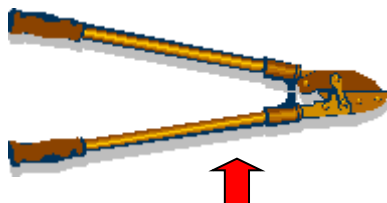
5). H&S equipment

- All volunteers should be provided with their own gloves which they should always bring to tasks. Replacements will be provided when needed.
- Spare gloves should always be available.
- Volunteers will be provided with their own hard hats and safety glasses on request.
- Spare hard hats and safety glasses should always be available when required by the task.

Tool by Tool

6). Loppers

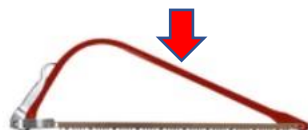
- Loppers are used for cutting small branches.
- Gloves may be worn on both hands to protect from thorns, etc..
- Do not attempt to cut branches thicker than the capacity of the loppers, generally the thickness of an adult's thumb, 20 – 30mm (although most Econet loppers have a specified capacity of around 45mm).
- Cut should be clean; do not force or rock from side to side, this will damage the tool.
- Carry loppers by your side holding by the lower handle.



- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to tools bag. **Do not** hang in tree.

7). Bowsaws and folding saws

- Used for scrub clearance, coppicing, tree felling and sectioning felled timber where loppers cannot be used.
- Gloves may be worn on both hands but **must** be worn on free hand for protection should the saw blade 'jump'.
- Wear hard hat when cutting anything above head height or where there is any danger from falling timber, e.g., dead or rotten branches.
- Saw using the full length of the blade.
- Free hand may be used to support or steady branch being cut but must be kept clear of the saw blade.
- Do not cut branches above head height. In general, the lower the height at which a branch is cut, the safer. At whatever height you cut, keep in mind those body parts at risk of being struck should the branch sever unexpectedly.
- Do not fell trees in the vicinity of overhead cables.
- Carry by the frame, blade down.



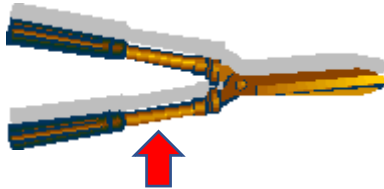
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to tools bag. **Do not** hang in tree.

8). Pole saws

- Used for cutting side branches from tree above head height.
- Always wear hard hat and safety glasses. Gloves may be worn.
- Do not use in the vicinity of overhead cables.
- Keep others clear of the immediate area. Post lookouts if necessary.
- Ensure blade is securely attached. Saw using the full length of the blade.
- Carry horizontally at side, blade down.

9). Shears

- Shears can be used for trimming and vegetation.
- Gloves may be worn on both hands to protect from thorns, sting nettles, plants likely to give an allergic reaction, etc.
- Do not attempt to cut branches thicker than the capacity of the shears.
- Cut should be clean; do not force or rock from side to side, this will damage the tool.
- Carry shears by your side holding by the lower handle.



- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to tools bag. **Do not** hang in tree.

10). Slashers and Brushing Hooks

- Primarily used for clearing bramble.
- Used with one hand gripping and the other guiding to tool, with a sweeping action allowing the momentum to do the work.
- Always work at a safe distant from others, at least twice the combined length of your arm and the slasher.
- Never wear gloves other than in exceptional circumstances.
 - Gloves may be worn on either the guiding hand or on both, if the risk of injury far exceeds the danger of losing grip.
 - Never wear gloves in wet conditions.
 - If gloves are worn, the safe working distance must be increased.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.
- Carry at side, blade down.



- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to other tools. **Do not** hang or prop in tree.

11). Grass Hooks

- Primarily used for clearing grass, nettles and other 'soft' vegetation.
- Used with one hand gripping in a sweeping motion. (TCV recommend the motion is away from the body (legs) however traditionally this may not have been the case but traditionally the user would have worn leather gaiters.)
- Always work at a safe distant from others, at least twice the combined length of your arm and the hook.
- Never wear a glove on the hand gripping the tool other than in exceptional circumstances.
 - A glove may be worn if the risk of injury far exceeds the danger of losing grip.
 - Never wear a glove in wet conditions.
 - If a glove is worn, the safe working distance must be increased.
- Carry at side, blade down.

- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to tools bag.

12). Lump hammers and mallets

- Primarily used for driving fencing stakes into ground.
- Do not wear glove on gripping hand.
- Preferably support stake with free hand which may be gloved; if assisted by another to support stake, that person **must** wear a hard hat. All others must maintain safe working distance.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, return to tool bag.

13). Crowbars

- Primarily used for levering heavy objects or creating pilot holes for stakes.
- Do not use in locations where underground utilities may be present, e.g., electricity cables.
- Gloves recommended. Avoid gripping too tightly.
- Steel capped boots strongly recommended.
- If levering, be mindful of slipping or the object suddenly moving.
- If creating pilot hole or similar activity, keep head (chin) clear when raising tool.
- Carry at side, at point of balance.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

14). Drivall (or post driver)

- Two- or four-handled hollow cylinder with a cast iron weighted end for the purpose of driving in posts.
- This is a **two-person** tool; it should not be used by a lone individual.
- Transport by carrying between two people.
- Hard hats must be worn and steel capped boots strongly recommended.
- Apart from those using the tool, all others must maintain a safe working distance.
- Only use on sound, regularly shaped posts of an appropriate size.
- Extra care when positioning tool on post or removing after use, to avoid toppling or losing balance.
- Do not support post with hands.
- To use:
 - With one person on each side taking a firm stance, legs and feet clear of the drivall.
 - Raise drivall taking care **not** to go above top of the post.
 - Relaxing grip without letting go, let weight of drivall drive post into the ground.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

15). Rakes, cromes and forks

- Purpose:
 - Garden and wooden hay rakes, for gathering cut vegetation.
 - Tarmac rakes, levelling ballast and chippings.
 - Cromes (aka muck rakes or manure drags), for clearing vegetation and debris from ponds.
 - Garden and hay forks, clearing vegetation.

- When using long handled tools, be aware of others working around you, maintain a safe working distant. Also, when using any fork to carry vegetation on the shoulder when additionally, extra care must be taken to avoid trip hazards.
- Carry to the side at point of balance, tines forward, pointing down.
- When not in use, lay on ground with tines pointing down, where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

16). Picks and mattocks

- Purpose:
 - Picks, for breaking up hard and stony ground.
 - Mattocks, for grubbing and breaking up hard ground.
- Neither tool should be used as a lever, use a crowbar instead.
- Mattocks are made of a softer metal then picks and are therefore more liable to damage if inappropriately used.
- Check head is secure before and regularly throughout use.
- Do not wear gloves.
- When working on stony ground, wear safety glasses.
- When swinging tool, be aware of others working around you, maintain a safe working distant.
- Carry at side, at point of balance, business end forward.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

17). Garden spades and forks

- For digging, including cultivation, creating post holes, etc.
- Do not dig in locations where underground utilities may be present, e.g., electricity cables.
- Wear sturdy boots.
- When pushing into ground, use ball or heel of the foot, **not** the arch as this can damage the foot. Do not jump on tool.
- Do not use for levering, use crowbar.
- Carry at side, at point of balance, business end forward.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

18). Shovels

- For lifting and shifting.
- Wear sturdy boots.
- Do not overload the tool.
- Use your arms and legs, avoid twisting the body.
- To shift a pile of material, dig out from the bottom. Push the blade in, let the material fall onto it, then squat down to lift with your legs, not your back.
- Carry at side, at point of balance, business end forward.
- When not in use, lay on ground where visible but not causing a trip hazard. Otherwise, store with other tools.

19). Wheelbarrows

- For transporting materials not people.
- Wear sturdy boots.
- Do not overload the barrow both in terms of its capacity and what you can easily push.
- Load so the weight is towards or over the wheel and is balanced.

- If the barrow starts to topple, let it!
- When not in use, stand where visible but not causing a trip hazard.

20). Note

This document is base on the 'BTCV Handtools Guide', see which for further information regarding the use of tools.