

GREEN GARAGE® by Rita Pelczar

Contributing editor Rita Pelczar reports on products she has found useful or innovative in her garden, with an emphasis on earth-friendly products and supplies.

It's time to gear up for another growing season. Early spring is a great time to look over your tools, see if any need sharpening, mending, or replacing, and to line up your supplies so that you're ready to go as soon as the ground thaws and temperatures start to climb.

Protecting Hands

If you're hard on gloves, like I am, some new gardening gloves are probably in order. The **MadGrip Pro Palm Knuckler Gardening Glove** from Gordini is a good choice for jobs where protection from blisters and scrapes is important. These machine washable gloves have a seamless construction and a thermoplastic rubber injected palm that is particularly effective for reducing vibration stress from various kinds of power equipment. Those rubber palms also provide an excellent non-slip grip, and the breathable knit back helps keep hands cool. Available at Ace Hardware and Northern Tool & Equipment.



Woman's Work continues to provide a fine selection of gloves designed with women in mind. What I like most about their machine-washable **Garden Gloves with Arm Saver** is the coverage they offer my forearms, considering the poison ivy that somehow finds its way into my gardens. With elbow-length cuffs that are secured by a pull cord cinch, and a UPF rating of 50+, they also protect from sun, insect bites, and scratches. The back of the hands and cuffs are made of cotton sateen with a touch of lycra for flexibility. The palms are durable synthetic leather. Available from www.womanswork.com.

Knee Comfort

When it's time to get down on the ground to plant, thin, or weed, kneepads may be your best friend. I've discovered they help reduce wear and tear on aging joints, and unlike foam cushions, the pads move with you as you progress down a row or through a bed. **On Your Kneez Pleez kneepads** use something called mini-cell bun foam, supplied by a manufacturer of kayak seats, to provide more durable and substantial padding than many kneepads. They are easily held in place with a pair of Velcro straps, and quickly dispelled my initial concern that they might feel cumbersome or awkward. Available from www.joy-us.com.



Un-kinkable Hose

Hoses can get heavy when you have to drag them from bed to bed, and kinks in the line reduce the flow of water and take time to straighten out. JGB Enterprises offers a solution to these problems with the **Tuff Guard "Perfect Garden Hose."** First of all, it's woven fiber core is very lightweight—35 to 50 percent lighter than conventional garden hoses. And the outside is wrapped with a flexible helix coil that prevents kinking, and provides protection from crushing. Visit www.tuffguardhose.com to locate a dealer near you.



Plugger-Planter

Last fall I planted a lot of bulbs using a tool from ProPlugger called the **5-IN-1 Landscape Plugger**. It significantly reduced my planting time and effort, particularly where I naturalized the bulbs in the lawn. This tool is made of steel, so it's heavy duty, and it has several advantages over hand-held bulb planters: it allows you to stand up while you dig your planting holes, and use your foot to press the cylinder into the soil. And you can dig several holes before you need to empty the cylinder of soil, so your digging goes fast. Adapter plates can be placed on the business end of the cylinder to adjust the planting depth to two, four, or six inches.



The plugger can also be used for plugging lawns, removing weeds (it's particularly good for wild onion), and even planting beds and border edgings, although several cylinders-worth of soil may need to be removed for this last task, depending on the size of your bedding plants. ProPlugger offers **Coco-Peat Disks**, made of coconut fiber, that expand to five times their size to fill the holes created by removing the plugs taken from turf or in weed removal. Available from www.ProPlugger.com.

A contributing editor for The American Gardener, Rita Pelczar lives in North Carolina. She is the editor-in-chief of the AHS's Homegrown Harvest (Mitchell Beazley/Octopus USA, 2010).