

# Garden News

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## TRIED & TESTED

# Trowel and error

Which trowels are up to the job? GN technical writer Helen Billiald puts them to the test



### Darlac PD540 Trowel with Rubber Grip

Stainless steel blade (marked with depth planting gauge) plus black and red rubber grip handle.

Overall length 36cm (14in), maximum blade width 8cm (3in).

**Verdict:** Comfortable ergonomic grip moulded to fit thumb, forefinger and main body of the hand. The handle curves downwards at the back making it easy to use in a reverse pulling action, since it gives you something to lever against. The blade has a depth gauge for planting bulbs (I'm not sure whether I would actually use this) and slices easily through the soil. A fantastic trowel.

**Price:** £7.99

**Stockists:** Tel: 01753 547790;  
www.darlac.co.uk

● If you're against any handle but wood, Darlac use the same blade on their wooden handled trowel, DP440A, the handle is a simple centrally tapered design, £7.99.

**BEST BUY**



**Rating: 9/10**

#### Draper Heavy Duty Hand Trowel

Stainless steel blade and plastic handle with leather hanging loop. Overall length 31cm (12in), maximum blade width 8cm (3in).

**Verdict:** A nicely shaped blade made digging planting holes quick work. The drawback was in the handle. I found it too short to grip comfortably (measuring just 10cm/4in) with the rear of my hand falling off the back, and its straight tubular shape awkward to grip. Its shortness made it difficult to use when drawing soil backwards.

**Price:** £4.75  
**Stockists:** Tel: 023 8049 4333;  
www.draper.co.uk



**Rating: 5/10**

#### Gardena Combisystem Hand Trowel

Bright blue steel blade and combistem grip with the option of using a longer handle. Overall length 37.5cm (14 1/2in), maximum blade width 8.7cm (3 3/8in).

**Verdict:** The plastic handle is a straight tubular design with a slight ridge underneath to stop your forefinger sliding forwards. Part of the combisystem range, the short handle is interchangeable with a choice of longer handles that you buy separately. It can then be used for weeding and cultivating borders when standing up. The orange knob is simple to twist to change between handles but I found it got in the way of my hand when used as a simple trowel, irrelevant of which way up it was placed. The trowel was too bulky to be used in a drawing action, but the large blade means you can dig deep planting holes.

**Price:** £6.99  
**Stockists:** Tel: 0191 2171537;  
www.gardena.co.uk



**Rating: 5/10**

#### Peta Easi-Grip Trowel

This is a stainless steel blade with green 'soft-feel' grip, overall length 27cm (approx 10 1/2 in), maximum blade width 7.5cm (3in). Its unusual shape aims to 'eliminate the strains and blisters that can be caused by conventional style garden tools'.

**Verdict:** I admit initial scepticism about this tool, thanks to its right-angled grip. But it was surprisingly easy to use, if a little strange to get used to. The blade was quite narrow, and fairly flat, carrying only small amounts of soil. The grip is designed to be used green handle uppermost, with moulding to accommodate finger placement, but I found it best used handle down in a pulling action, making the excavation of planting holes quick and easy.

**Price:** £9.95  
**Stockists:** Tel: 01245 231 118;  
www.peta-uk.com



**Rating: 7/10**

#### Senator Classic Hand Trowel

Carbon steel blade and oak handle with double turned detail and leather hanging loop. Overall length 33.5cm (13in), maximum blade width 8.5cm (3 3/8in).

**Verdict:** An instantly recognisable classic trowel design, with the oak handle narrows slightly in the centre, naturally moulding to your hand. The decorative grooves near the blade rubbed on my thumb and forefinger, so while undeniably attractive I'd prefer to be without them.

**Price:** £6.99  
**Stockists:** Tel: 0121 504 2859



**Rating: 6/10**

#### Yeoman Lavender Trowel

Stainless steel blade with lavender rubber handle, also available in pink and green. Overall length 33cm (13in), maximum blade width 7.5cm (3in).

**Verdict:** A comfortable ergonomic handle combined with narrow scooped blade made this a great little trowel for weeding and digging out planting holes. When turning the trowel round to use in a pulling action I found the tip a little narrow to be comfortably gripped. However I liked the flat platform for your thumb and it's bright colour makes it easy to track down in the border.

**Stockists:** Tel: 0121 504 2859;  
www.yeomangarden.co.uk



**Rating: 7/10**