

Flora & Fauna

## How to Clean & Care for Gardening Tools

With a new year underway, many gardeners are already dreaming of springtime and new growth. January might not seem like a prime month for gardening activities, but it’s a good opportunity to shake off the winter blahs and get your tools ready for the next season.

### 1. Gather Supplies.

Head to your local home goods store and pick up the following: a good set of gardening gloves, a putty knife, steel wool, a 3.5-gallon plastic bucket, 1 Tbsp dish soap, 2 cups bleach, 1 cup vegetable oil, a 5-oz can of lighter fluid, all-purpose play sand, bleach-free disinfecting wipes, and some old towels.

### 2. Remove Dirt.

First, clean your tools of all caked-on dirt. Use warm water, dish soap, and your putty knife to scrape off the really tough spots.

### 3. Remove Rust.

After you’ve removed all the dirt, check for any rust, especially around springs and joints of shears and scissors. If you discover any rust on your tools, take your steel wool and give those spots a good scrub.

### 4. Unstick Sticky Sap.

To get rid of sticky sap, dab a bit of lighter fluid onto a cloth and use it to wipe off those gunky spots.

### 5. Soak Tools.

Once the caked-on dirt, rust, and other grime have been removed, dunk your tools in a bucket of hot water and dish soap to remove any remaining residues.

### 6. Rinse and Dry.

After allowing your tools to soak in the hot water for a while, rinse them off with clean water and dry them with an old towel. Be sure they’re completely dry before you put them away or else rust will form.

### 7. Plan for Maintenance.

Make a “quick clean” bucket to help keep your tools in good shape year-round. Fill this bucket with a mix of sand and vegetable oil. Dip the tools in the bucket after gardening to remove dirt and protect the finish.

### 8. Disinfect.

If you have plants with fungal or bacterial problems, you can use bleach-free disinfectant wipes or a sanitizing soak in a bleach solution (two cups of bleach for every one gallon of water) to help curb the spread of annoying infestations. Make sure to rinse and dry the tools thoroughly once finished.

## Clean Bee

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## Cleaning Corner:

### How to Clean Exercise Equipment

Most of us are pretty considerate when it comes to wiping down exercise equipment at the gym (who wants to touch someone else’s sweat, right?), but it’s also important that your home workout equipment get a good cleaning from time to time.

Gym equipment can harbor thousands of germs, including rhinoviruses, streptococcal bacteria, and others. Frequently touched items, like weights, dumbbells, and medicine balls are more likely to accumulate a buildup of body oils, lotions, and dust, which can be difficult to remove over time.

Even yoga and exercise mats can accumulate sweat and dirt, which creates a breeding ground for bacteria and germs.

You can buy a disinfectant at the store or make one at home by mixing 1 cup of white vinegar, 1/2 cup of baking soda, and 2 cups of hot water into a spray bottle. Spray your equipment down and wipe it with a clean dry cloth after each use.

# January

1701	Great Britain & Ireland union is in effect, creating United Kingdom
1847	Michigan is the first state to abolish capital punishment
1853	The first practical horse-drawn fire engine in the US enters service
1892	The Ellis Island Immigrant Station in New York formally opens
1948	The first color newsreel is filmed in Pasadena, CA
1959	Alaska is admitted as the 49 <sup>th</sup> U.S. state with a land mass almost one-fifth the size of the lower 48 states together
1960	Johnny Cash plays the first of many free concerts behind bars
1999	Eleven European nations begin using a new single European currency, the Euro.

# Healthy Living: Toning Your Arms and Legs

Do you often find yourself doing the same few exercises when you work out? Do you ever skip out on the gym because you're unsure what kind of workout to do once you get there? If you find yourself in a rut or in need of some exercises, check out these great arm and leg exercises to help you change up your routine and start the year off right.

We've included descriptions on a couple of the exercises listed below, but if you're new to these types of moves and aren't sure what to do, look them up online to see photos or watch short videos to see how they should be performed.

## Arm Exercises

- Bicep Curls
- Overhead Tricep Extension  
*Start by holding a dumbbell over your head with your palms toward the ceiling. Keeping your upper arms close to your head, bend your arms so the dumbbell goes behind your head until your forearms touch your biceps. Then, use your triceps to extend your arms back to the starting position.*
- Dips
- Chest Press
- Elbow Plank  
*Bonus: This exercise also works your core!*
- Military Press  
*Start with one dumbbell in each hand at shoulder height on either side of your head. Rotate your wrists so your palms are facing forward. Push the dumbbells up above your head until they touch at the top, and slowly lower them back to the start.*

## Leg Exercises

- Leg Extensions
- Hamstring Leg curls
- Curtsey Squats  
*Start with your legs shoulder width apart and step your left leg back and across to the right. Squat so your right thigh is parallel with the ground. Switch legs and repeat.*
- Pistol Squats  
*Start with your arms straight out in front of you at shoulder level. Raise your right leg off the floor about 6 inches in front of you and slowly lower your body as far down as you can. Be sure to work both legs!*
- Lunges
- Step Ups  
*Hold a dumbbell in each hand and stand in front of a knee-high step. Step forward on the platform with one leg and pick your body up using that leg. Step back with either leg to return to the floor.*

## Kid Corner: Four Fun Themed Movie Marathon Ideas

Who doesn't love a good movie marathon when it's wet or cold outside? With the right provisions, you can create a fun themed movie marathon that will make you completely forget the yucky weather outside. Check out some of these great tips to really make your movie day something special!

- 1. Wild, Wild West**                      Movie Suggestions: *Toy Story 1, 2, and 3*  
*Decorations:* Have your little cowpokes cut cactuses and cowboy boots out of construction paper and hang them on the wall. Cut out the center of a large piece of poster board and decorate it to create a "wanted" poster. Have your kids hold up the poster and give their best bandit smile!  
*Food:* Serve up sloppy Joes, hamburgers, or hot dogs along with some baked beans to make your movie marathon the routinest, tootinest one in town!
- 2. It's a Jungle Out There!**              Movie Suggestions: *The Jungle Book, Tarzan, and The Emperor's New Groove*  
*Decorations:* Head to the local craft store and pick up some animal print fabric pieces. Drape them over a few chairs set around some comfy pillows to make a cool animal-print blanket fort.  
*Food:* Prepare "Zebra Kisses" by placing a striped Hershey's Kiss in the center of a bite-sized pretzel and pop it in the microwave for a few seconds until it melts. For a healthier option, cut up some kiwi, bananas, and orange slices. Arrange the banana into a tree trunk with clusters of orange at the bottom (as bushes) and the kiwi on top (for leaves), and you'll have yourself some jungle-themed fruit trays!
- 3. Under the Sea!**                          Movie Suggestions: *The Little Mermaid, Finding Nemo, and Finding Dory*  
*Decorations:* Hang blue, white, and teal balloons from the ceiling or tape them to the walls to give your living room a bubbly appearance. Tape blue plastic table cloths to the windows or drape small sections over lampshades to give the entire room a bluish underwater feel.  
*Food:* Serve up some peanut butter and "jellyfish" sandwiches. Use a cookie cutter to cut them into the shape of a star. You can also make some macaroni and cheese using shell noodles.
- 4. Monsters and Robots**                  Movie Suggestions: *Wall-E, Monster's Inc., and Robots*  
*Decorations:* Set the mood by cutting different colored pieces of construction paper into gears and placing them all over the walls. You can also build your own robots by wrapping different sized boxes in aluminum foil and stacking a few on top of one another. Cut out eyes, nose, a mouth, and various gears to glue to your robot to bring him to life!  
*Food:* For snacks, grab some licorice for "wires," Rice Krispies™ Treats for "battery cells," and a bowl of multi-colored veggie chips that you can pretend are "computer chips."

**Ingredients:**

- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs, toasted
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 1 1/2 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut in half
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper

**Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. In a small bowl combine toasted panko, Parmesan, and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Set aside.
2. In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, add drizzle of olive oil. Place the brussels sprouts cut-side down and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add more olive oil and sear chicken until golden brown on one side; season with salt and black pepper; transfer to a plate.
3. Melt butter in pan over medium heat; sauté garlic and onion with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Cook for 1 minute. Add chicken stock and balsamic vinegar.
4. Return chicken to the sauce, seared-side up. Divide cheese and breadcrumb mixture evenly among chicken breasts. Add brussels sprouts and transfer pan to oven; bake 10 to 15 minutes.
5. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately.

### Four New Year's Resolutions Worth Keeping

It's time to ring in the New Year, and that means new resolutions! Unfortunately for some of us, it also means setting crazy goals that are monumentally hard to achieve. Instead of setting yourself up for failure and disappointment, consider the following more reasonable resolutions:

1. **Stay Healthy.** Rather than setting a goal of losing weight, make a resolution to commit to better health this year. Start with small changes, like eating more fresh fruits and veggies at every meal or weaning yourself off sodas and sugary drinks. Then work on adding more daily movement to your routine, whether it's walking, trips to the gym, or after-school dance parties with your kids.
2. **Get Organized.** If you always feel like you're running around from crisis to crisis or drowning in a never-ending to-do list, a commitment to better organization and time management can help ease your stress. Studies show that writing a plan down on paper will help make sure you stick to it. So start your day by writing down just three tasks to complete for the day (yes—just three!). Focus your efforts on doing your daily three tasks and you'll be amazed at how much more you're able to accomplish.
3. **Keep Learning.** As we get older, we sometimes lose our sense of curiosity. We stop reading for fun, we stop browsing interesting topics just because we can, and we just stop wondering about the world around us. But studies have shown that a challenged, stimulated brain may well be the key to a vibrant late life. So join a book club, take a class at a local community college, or find some free lectures at your local library to keep yourself mentally fit throughout the New Year.
4. **Focus on You.** It can be hard to focus on ourselves sometimes. It often feels like we're being "selfish" or "self-centered" when we do things for ourselves before others. But neglecting your own needs can lead to depression, anxiety, fatigue, etc. Make a resolution to do more things for yourself this year, whether it's a little pampering at the spa, movie dates with someone special, or ordering your favorite dessert at a restaurant.

### ...Basic Carpet Care Tips...

Regular professional cleanings are essential to maintain the life and longevity of your carpet, but in between those cleanings, there's plenty you can do to keep your carpet looking its best.

- **Regular vacuuming** should be done every 1–2 weeks, and even more often in high traffic areas, such as entryways and living rooms. Replace your vacuum bag regularly or empty the dust cup after each use. Don't forget to replace the filters, too!
- **Blot spots and stains immediately.** Spots and spills are a fact of daily life, but when accidents happen, be sure to get things cleaned up right away. The longer a spot sits untreated, the harder it is to clean. In some cases, it can even lead to permanent damage.

To clean a spot, first blot it with a clean damp cloth to remove as much of the substance as possible.

Next, mix 1/4 cup of white vinegar with 1 Tbs of Dawn® dish soap in a large spray bottle and fill with warm water. Spray the area liberally and let soak for 5–10 minutes. Then blot (don't rub!) with a clean dry towel until the stain is removed.

Of course, for bad spots or severe soiling, just give us a call!

- **Leave shoes at the door.** It's amazing how much dust and dirt (not to mention other disgusting things) get tracked in on the bottoms of shoes. Make sure your family members and guests take their shoes off when they enter your home.

