

Using Horticultural Hand Tools Safely¹

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BEFORE USING HAND TOOLS

- Always buy quality tools to minimize breakage.
- Select the right tool for the job.
- Purchase tools that are comfortable in size and weight for the person(s) using them.
- Inspect all tools carefully for dull blades, damaged handles, loose heads, etc. Replace or repair as needed.
- Sharpen all cutting tools before using and frequently thereafter. A sharp tool is a safer tool.
- Always wear safety glasses when sharpening tools with a power grinder. Never wear gloves for this operation, to avoid having a hand caught and pulled into the wheel.
- Wear safety glasses and safety shoes when performing striking, shearing, or other forceful-type actions.
- Wear sturdy gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants when working with dense plant materials. This is particularly important for thorny or spiny type plants such as cacti, mesquite, etc.

WHEN USING HAND TOOLS

- Stretch or warm up before performing heavy duties such as digging, chopping, etc., to avoid muscle pulls and strains.
- Keep sharp points of tools away from the body.
- Take periodic rest breaks especially when performing strenuous jobs such as digging, spading, or sawing.
- Keep children, bystanders, and pets a safe distance from the work area.

- When stopping or interrupting work you should place sharp, pointed or long-handled tools so they cannot be stepped on or tripped over.
- When not using pointed or sharp edged tools, always place them with the points or edges down to prevent people stepping on them.

WORKING FROM LADDERS

- Select the right ladder for the job. (see Figure 1)
- Check the ladder for structural defects. Repair or replace the ladder as necessary.
- Avoid metal ladders near power lines.
- Always face the ladder and grasp the side rails with both hands.
- Never carry tools when ascending or descending. Put them in a sack that can be strapped to the shoulder or raise and lower them with a bucket or rope.
- Do not lean the ladder against insecure surfaces such as shrubbery, tree branches, etc.
- Place the ladder at about a 75-degree angle with the ground. Set the foot of the ladder a distance from the object equal to one-fourth its total length.
- Be sure the ladder is sitting on firm level ground.
- While working on a ladder, stay below the top three rungs, unless equipped with a firm handhold or a safety belt.

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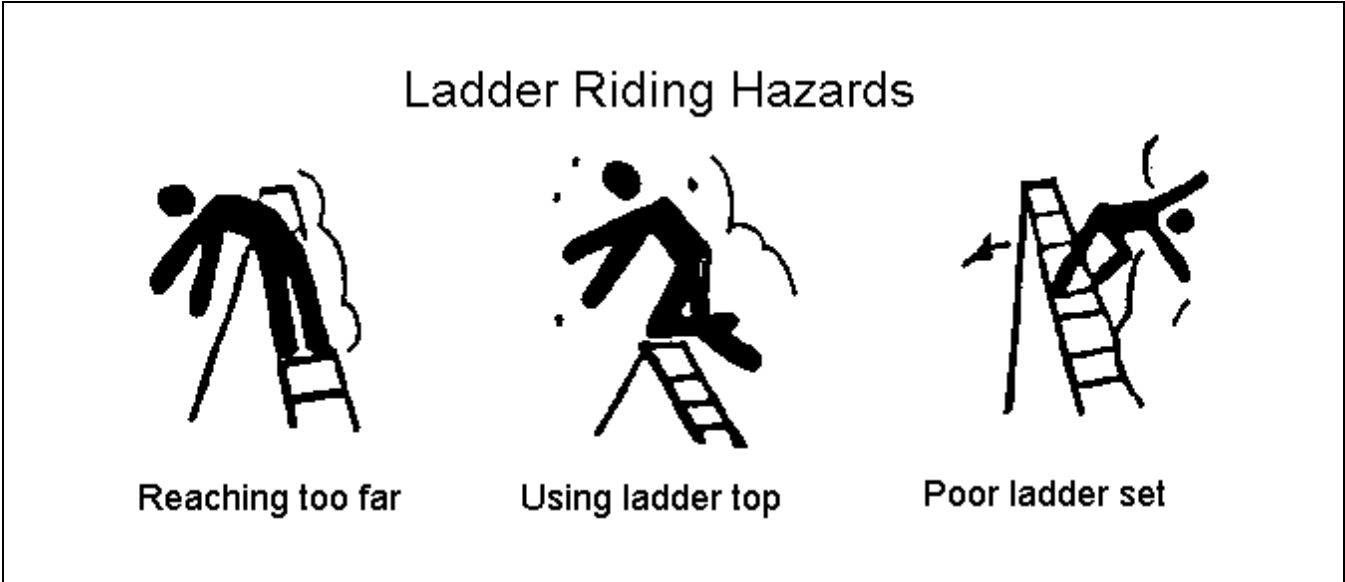


Figure 1.