

The Combination Pick Hoe

by Jude Hobbs

By chance, I found the perfect gardening tool while sauntering by the tool rack at a local garden store. Pausing briefly to breath the scent of metal and wood and stooping to try out a few likely prospects, the pick/hoe caught my eye. After holding it for 10 seconds I knew it was the one. It,s the tool I would want with me if I were stranded on an island.

A good tool is like an extension of your body, the continuation of an appendage. The balance of this well-crafted tool allows me to use it for tasks requiring repetitive motion without pain. It is weighted perfectly to most strengths and body types.

The pick/hoe has a 15-inch handle, with a three-inch pick and a four-inch-long hoe. I find the broader, two-inch-wide hoe side useful for weeding most anything. I also use it for digging small holes for transplanting. The pick side works well for getting around roots, digging a line for planting peas, beans and other large-seeds, and for grubbing out rocks.

Depending on what you use it for, this tool could outlive most of us. If it is treated well, the handle is apt to need replacing, but the metal is very tough. Just store it out of the weather. I sharpen the pick/hoe with a file when it needs it. As with any tool, clean it by washing off any mud and drying. Once a year, often in the winter, I use an environmentally friendly oil on the handle and metal.

Beautifully constructed, the combination pick-hoe is made in Japan and imported into the US by Hida Tool and Hardware Inc. from Berkeley, California. I asked a Japanese woman in one of my classes to translate the writing on the handle, and she told me it says "the village blacksmith." This seems appropriate as the strong-forged metal shows a high level of craftsmanship and is sure to be long-lasting.

Note the wedge on the top where the implement fits into the handle. The wedge is used to keep the tool head firmly connected to the handle. If the head becomes loose, tap the wedge with a hammer, and it will tighten the implement to the handle.

To order a combination pick hoe for \$19.80 plus shipping and handling, contact Hida Tool and Hardware Co., 1333 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702-1021; toll free number, 888 284-7473 fax; (510) 524-3700; (510) 524-3423 fax; www.hidatool.com.