

How to make recycling easier when gardening

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shreds weeds, thatch and paper. The shredder sells for about \$350, the leafeater, about \$99. Other companies make similar products; cost goes up with increased horsepower. All are available locally at hardware and department stores, building and gardening centers.

Recycling lawn clippings has become as easy as cutting the grass. A lawn mower's not just a mower anymore, they're mulchers that grind clippings and blow them back into the lawn in one simple operation. Prices start at about \$200.

Some homeowners are trading their gas guzzlers for energy-efficient push mowers. You can exercise and cut the grass at the same time. These old reliables are available at area stores for \$70 to \$85; the grass catcher is \$18 extra.



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The right tools make it easy to keep your yard neat. Above: A hand-held gas leaf blower by Toro.

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A HANDY item out on the market is Eco-Spout-3 by M.S. Harman Co. The Eco-Spout-3 turns plastic, milk, juice, detergent, anti-freeze and other containers into a sprinkling can, a direct-flow pouring device or large spill-proof funnel. At \$1.49, it's one of the best buys around.

Today's newest garden innovations are surprisingly clever and user-friendly. Consider a "stem stripper" (Jackson & Perkins), which eliminates a thorny problem by quickly and cleanly removing the foliage and thorns on rose stems, or a self-cleaning rake (Gardener's Supply) with a spring action head that folds up with an easy push. Debris slides right off the tines.

Gard'n'Grip by True Temper is a line of gardening tools that won't "rub you the wrong way." A closed-cell foam grip reduces hand fatigue and helps prevent blisters. Prices start at \$14.99 for a leaf rake.

If you've let the hedges grow out of control, reach for a sturdy electric hedge trimmer. The most powerful models have reciprocating blades that smoothly cut thick stems and fast motors for fast cutting pace. Double switches prevent accidental starting.

Electric weed trimmers and cordless brooms also are available to keep your garden neat with a minimum amount of effort. Prices range from \$50 to \$169.

KNEE PADS, made by a number of manufacturers, protect a gardener's most vulnerable joint. You can find them at local stores for \$3.99.

Concerned about wasting water? Try the new landscape fabrics.

Easy Gardener, for instance, markets WeedBlock, a strong synthetic fabric with thousands of "micro-funnels." Tapered at the bottom, the funnels permit air and

water through while simultaneously blocking sunlight and weeds.

The fabric also wards off many troublesome insects and significantly reduces the amount of water lost to the evaporation process. It's sold in rolls; a 3 foot by 25 foot roll costs \$9.49; a 3 foot by 50 foot roll, \$15.29. You can find WeedBlock at area hardware stores, nurseries, and department stores.

IS THERE a snake in your grass? Maybe there should be. For \$4.99, you can buy a giant 6-foot snake by Dalen Products. It's made out of heavy vinyl and will scare birds, rabbits, rodents and other pests. If snakes aren't for you, how about red and silver foil tape coated with Mylar.

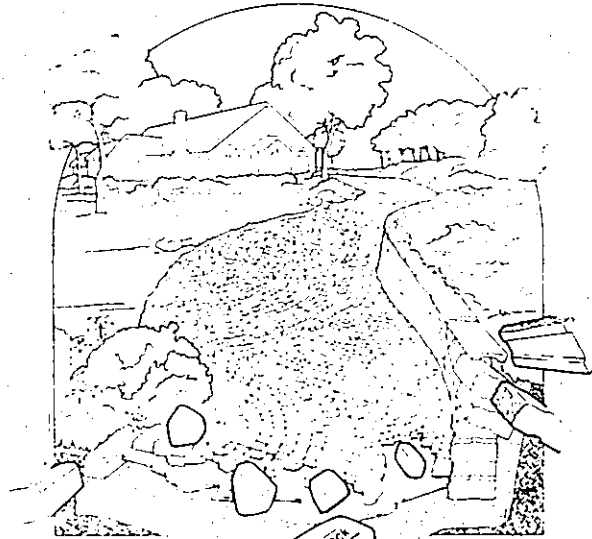
"The tape's physical presence, flashing colors, noise in the wind, strength and ease of application, make it a handy tool," said Glenn Dudderar, extension wildlife specialist at Michigan State University.

The tape will help keep robins out of the strawberry patch, pheasants out of the garden or gulls off of docks, swimming platforms and boats. It isn't widely available. For more information, write Reed Joseph International Co., P.O. Box 894, Greenville, Miss. 38701, 1-800-647-5554 or (601) 335-5822.

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