



# **Darlac**

The cutting edge of gardening...

## **A PRUNER FOR LIFE**



**FORGED**

**“A Pruner for life”**...a bold statement indeed, but it could be true.

It depends primarily on you the owner, and we at Darlac would like to help make this a statement of fact. Every Darlac tool is engineered to a very high standard however, as with most products that have moving parts, they also have their limitations. In our over exuberance to maintain the garden, we often forget to care for our tools.

### **FACTS:**

1. A cut capacity is just that, it is a dimension, nothing to do with density or hardness. Keep in mind that whilst almost any cutting tool will cut a Daffodil at 20mm, few will cut a 20mm Oak branch!
2. Most cutting tools are made from carbon steel to give the finest edge and easy maintenance. Depending on the type of coating used, carbon steel will always be rust susceptible to some degree. Rust can even appear on Stainless Steel!
3. All tools of function require maintenance. Anything with moving parts will need care and attention even if it is just the occasional tightening or loosening of nuts and bolts and a little oil.
4. Many modern tools are focussed on lack of weight. Whilst they are usually made from high quality materials and designed to maximise structural integrity, ultimately they are not indestructible. This requires consideration when using such tools.

The absolute golden rule when using any gardening tool is NEVER STRUGGLE! At Darlac we always say that if you are struggling the tool is probably suffering excessively.

If you find yourself struggling, always opt for the next tool up the chain as follows:

1. Bypass Pruner
2. Anvil Pruner  
OR one with a mechanical benefit  
(Ratchet/Compound)
3. Bypass Lopper
4. Anvil Lopper  
OR one with mechanical benefit  
(Ratchet/Compound)
5. Hand Saw
6. Chain Saw



It is never a good idea to service a tool in the middle of a job as it inevitably takes you away from the task at hand.

Of course we sometimes find the tool is unable to do the job at hand which is why we always recommend servicing your tools before you put them away.

This means they will be ready for action next time you need them.

Check the following:

1. Does the tool need oiling? All tools with moving parts require some lubrication from time to time. This should primarily be applied to the moving joints but a good coat all over never does any harm and also helps to protect from rust.

2. Is the tool sharp? A good sharp edge is essential for the best results and our award winning DP100 Diamond Sharpeners are the best. They have been recommended on no less than three separate occasions by a top consumer magazine who thoroughly tested them against other top brand sharpeners.

3. Is anything loose? Most tools with moving parts will have nuts and bolts which are not just holding things together but creating tension between parts. This is absolutely critical with bypass cutters as they often struggle more because of incorrect tensioning than any other fault.

Older gardeners will often say, “this belonged to my grandfather and it’s as good as the day it was made”! It’s doubtful, of course, that they actually know; in fact most of them were probably not even born when their Grandfather purchased the tool but one wouldn’t wish to disillusion their rosy memories. The truth of the matter is that in days gone by people looked after things better, so yes it is quite possible that even Great Grandfathers tools that we lovingly keep in the shed will still operate. If we compare directly to a modern alternative however the difference will almost certainly become apparent.



Good maintenance is just about taking a minute or two, a few days every year to ensure the tools in our shed are in good working order.

## **1. LUBRICATION**

This is the easiest to deal with. There are many proprietary brands available with either a directional spout for spot oiling, or a spray for more general application. The golden rule here is “if it moves, oil it”. If it doesn’t, oil it anyway because it stops rust from taking up residence. If you are dealing with irrigation tools such as spray guns or sprinklers, it is best to purchase a special lubricant for this purpose as most normal oils will wash away quite quickly.



## **2. SHARPENING**

There is a common myth regarding sharpening that it is a skill only engineers are capable of. Which is a total misconception.

If a few simple rules are followed it really is just common sense.

### THE BASIC RULES OF SHARPENING

#### A. SAFETY FIRST

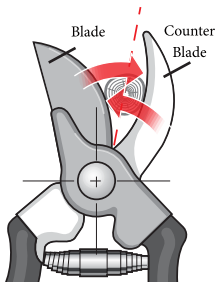
Always take extra care, especially when your hand may be facing the cutting edge.

## B. METHOD

When unsure how to sharpen a particular implement, remember that the act of sharpening will take steel off the appliance. Therefore, ask the question “if I take steel from this part, how might it effect the working of the tool? You are aiming to sharpen the tool where it has previously been sharpened so look for the edges that were sharp when you bought the tool and sharpen these to roughly the angle that they already have. Remember, only sharpen the existing edges, do not try to add edges to flat surfaces!

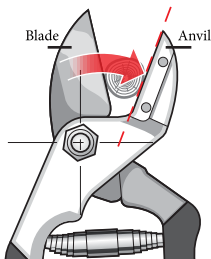
## C. DEGREE

Examine the edge to ascertain how blunt or damaged it is. This will help to select the appropriate grade of abrasive necessary to sharpen the tool, without spending too long doing it.



# BYPASS

A pruning tool that makes a nice clean cut using a curved blade that bypasses the counter blade in the same manner as a pair of scissors. The cutting blade is sharpened on the outside edge and it bypasses the thicker counter blade.



# ANVIL

A pruning tool with a blade that closes down on a flat surface or anvil. A slicing action similar to a knife against a cutting board. These are usually, but not always, sharpened on both sides.

## **BYPASS PRUNERS & LOPPERS**

Bypass pruners and loppers will generally only have one blade, the lower part being the counter blade which should never require sharpening. The cut of a bypass tool is achieved by the blade precisely passing by the counter blade. It therefore follows that you should never sharpen the flat side of the blade. If steel is removed from here, the two parts will no longer meet precisely and the tool will fail to cut. You must only sharpen on the outside or bevelled side of the blade. Look at the tool to find the angle that it was originally ground at and mimic this (this angle will differ from tool to tool, depending on the manufacturer and the type of implement).

## **SHEARS & SCISSORS**

Shears and scissors are similar to bypass tools except they generally have two blades, therefore it will be necessary to sharpen both. Remember, only sharpen on the outside (the bevelled edge). Never sharpen the inside (the flat edge).

NB: A few scissors or shears also have a blade and counter blade like bypass pruners.

## **EXCEPTION**

The only exception to the above is if you find it necessary to aggressively sharpen due to damaged blades. Aggressive sharpening will ultimately create a burr and it will therefore become necessary to clean the burr from the flat side of the blades. To do this, simply rest the sharpener flat against the flat side of the blade and stroke from the heel to the tip of the blade once should suffice.



## **ANVIL PRUNERS & LOPPERS**

Anvil pruners and loppers are generally ground on both sides so the blade will need sharpening on both sides.

## **KNIVES**

Knives are also generally ground on both sides. This is easy to establish by examining the blade to see if one side is completely flat.

Normally it is only handed knives which are flat on one side, i.e. a specific left or right handed knife. This occurs most commonly in budding or pruning knives.

## **3. ADJUSTMENT**

Tensioning of all bypass action tools is critical, it is also easy to do.

All Darlac tools are adjustable where necessary and only require an appropriate spanner and/or screwdriver. As a rule of thumb the pivot should be tightened slowly to the point where the tool ceases to function, and then released back very slightly.

Some Darlac tools in the Professional or Expert ranges have more sophisticated tensioning bolts which also have locking plates to avoid loosening with use.

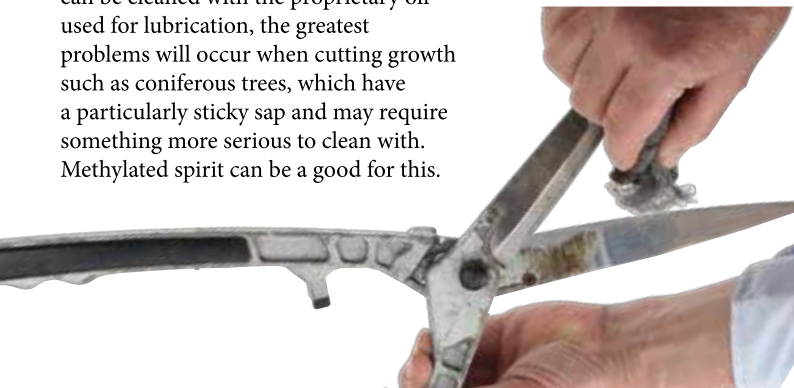
All pivots will ultimately wear and for this reason they are a standard replaceable part on our tools.

## **4. CLEANING**

Build up of sap can sometimes be a problem although the best tools will often include a deep sap groove to lessen this. Whilst most of the dirt can be cleaned with the proprietary oil used for lubrication, the greatest

problems will occur when cutting growth such as coniferous trees, which have a particularly sticky sap and may require something more serious to clean with.

Methylated spirit can be a good for this.



## 5. RESURECTION

Sometimes we just let things get a bit out of hand but it does not necessarily have to be the end of life for your tool.

Most garden hand tools are relatively easy to dismantle requiring only one nut/bolt removing: once separated it is much easier to deal with a build up of rust, sap and dirt. Fine wire wool is definitely the best tool for this job. Rub vigorously over the rusted areas and clean back to bare metal being ever mindful of the sharp edge. You may not regain the original shine but as long as the pitting is smoothed away and the tool is back to its original profile, this should be fine. Pay particular attention to the flat areas of bypass tools where the two parts will rub together to form a cut; ensure not to remove too much metal from the flat edge as putting an angle here will damage the function of the tool.

Once properly cleaned and reassembled, tension correctly as previously mentioned, sharpen as required. Hopefully you will now have your beloved tool back almost as good as new.

It only remains to say, if you have invested in a Darlac tool, don't forget that we carry an amazing array of spare parts available to you, our valued customer, at modest prices to help you maintain your purchase and hopefully help you to keep YOUR "pruner for life".

## HAPPY GARDENING

