



## Finally, a Shovel That Works!

Written by cdkbriggs 03/30/12 at 3:32pm

I have fallen in love with a shovel. Finally.

As an able-bodied woman of average height and weight and shape (pear, thank you very much), who is perfectly capable of double digging a garden bed or digging a deep hole for a tree or shoveling mulch and/or cow manure into a wheelbarrow (in fact, likes to do such things) if given a satisfactory shovel, I have found myself, all of my gardening life, tossing man-sized shovels into a corner after a couple of hours of work, muttering off-color epithets, and reaching for Tylenol. The typical shovel is designed for a 5'10" man of average weight and shape (not pear shaped, more an upside down pear or a triangle with the pointy end down) which means his center of gravity is at his sternum or up around his collar bones, as it is for most men. My center of gravity is at my pelvis, as it is for most women.

So why not just use short-shaft shovels if you are a woman, you may be thinking? The length of the shaft of the shovel is not really the point; long or short shafted, the typical shovel is designed around a center of gravity significantly higher off the ground than mine, including the shape of the blade, the angle it is attached to the shaft, and the balance of the whole tool. So, to use this mess of a shovel, I must over-use my upper body strength, while not being able to take advantage of the power that can come from my lower center of gravity. And because the span of my palm is a bit smaller than the average man's, I must grip this disastrous shovel without the full power of my whole hand, putting more pressure on my fingers than is natural, so I can get shin splints in my forearms if I am not careful to take breaks. All of which makes for inefficient work, and the appearance, to my male fellow gardeners, that I am not all that strong. Well, make me dig with my fingertips and without the use of my hips or thighs, what in the world would you expect? And a child-sized shovel is not an answer. It is as light weight as the kid who is playing with it, as it should be, so it useless to an adult woman with a hole to dig or a load of cow manure to spread.

But two women, probably as fed up with wrong-sized shovels as I have been for years, finally said, ENOUGH, and designed a shovel for women. Ann Adams and Liz Brensingner of Green Heron Tools are my new heroines. I discovered their company through an article in a recent Organic Gardening magazine (Vol. 59:2). Serious science went into the research and design, and in the testing of the prototype, leading to a shovel that weighs less than 4 1/2 pounds, comes in three shaft lengths (yes, women come in a variety of heights!), has a larger-than-usual foot tread (so we can use our power source!), has a hollow D-shaped handle tilted to allow us to use the leverage our hips generate and sized to our palm width, and has a very strong blade shaped and angled to cut as well as scoop. You can find this marvelous thing at [greenherontools.com](http://greenherontools.com) or at [www.HERShovel.com](http://www.HERShovel.com). Mine came just a few days after I ordered it and has had its first workout—two and a half hours of Pine Fine shoveling into a caravan of wheelbarrows at the [Civic Garden Center](#) as the Dirt Crew mulched the hosta garden on Wednesday. No pain, no Tylenol. I love it. It works. FINALLY!

Cindy Briggs