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IN THE GARDEN



JON MURRAY / PNG

Maria Rajanayagam with the garden brooms made from recycled coconut leaves and husks in Sri Lanka.

MAINTENANCE

Time to make a clean sweep

These are the tools that are going to make it a whole lot easier to tidy up the garden this fall

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The worst part of coming to the end of the gardening season is that there is always so much cleanup to do -- leaves to rake; decks, paths and patios to sweep; soggy hosta leaves to dispose of, and so on.

Even if you decide to leave most of your faded and bedraggled perennials unclipped until spring, which is an option many choose, there's still plenty of sweeping and raking and general autumn tidy-up to do.

But this year will be different. I have three new tools in my cleanup arsenal that I am excited about because they are going to make the job of tidying up a whole lot easier.

Here they are, in no particular order of importance or value. I love each one of them, not merely for their efficiency and effectiveness, but because I think each one is beautifully designed and a pleasure to handle.

1. THE GARDEN BROOM

This is the basic broom they use in Sri Lanka, where it is made from recycled material from the coconut tree. I first saw a version of this broom being used by gardeners on the Amalficoast in Italy.

I stopped and watched them for quite a while as they swept paths clean-as-a-whistle with one or two effortless swipes.

When I got home I bought myself the best corn-broom I could find but, nope, it just wasn't as good. The twiggy brush-part was just not rigid or sturdy enough to make a clean sweep.

Then Maria Rajanayagam of Franmar International Importers came into my life with The Garden Broom.

She lived in Sri Lanka for eight years and noticed how everyone used these coconut brooms to tidy up their yards.

"When I came back here, my mother and I were talking and she said she thought the brooms would work really well here. It was really her idea."

"I had a friend send some over to me and I found they worked amazingly well in all weather conditions."

Rajanayagam gave some of the brooms as gifts to friends and neighbours and she discovered they loved them. "They kept asking me if I could get more, as they wanted to give them as gifts, too, so I thought I needed to look at this more seriously as a little business venture."

The brush part of the broom is made from the hard midribs of the dried leaves of the coconut tree. The binding used to fix the brush to the broom-handle is made from recycled coconut husk and shell. The handle is made from recycled rubber tree wood. This is the standard broom in households in Sri Lanka," says Rajanayagam. "It is used all the time there for all sorts of cleaning. The beauty is that these are made from recycled material, which makes them environmentally friendly."

I noticed that the broom is even more effective when it is turned sideways to compact the twiggy brush-fibres into a more solid block, which makes it easier when you are trying to sweep wet leaves that have fixed themselves to the brick of a patio or wood of a deck. The Garden Broom is available from Art Knapp's Plantland and Florist in Port Coquitlam and Art's Nursery in Surrey for \$29.99.