



Everything I sell is handmade
by me in the woods of Maine.

WHAT IS A DIBBLE?

The dibble is an ancient garden tool. It is used to prepare the earth for receiving seeds, tubers, bulbs, and bare root stock. In fact, the word "dibble" is derived from the Middle English *dibben*, which means "to make a hole in the soil." It is a very common tool in England where it is known as a 'dibber' or a 'dibbler'.



THE STORY OF THE DIBBLE

Around 10,000 B.C. man made the shift from being a nomadic hunter/gatherer to a settled planter/herder. It's not hard to imagine an early farmer picking up a stick to stab holes in the earth to receive seeds. Considering the length of time dibbles have been around, you'd expect their design and use would have evolved a great deal. In fact, they have changed relatively little. Dibbles boast a raw, elegant simplicity that defies improvement.

Early American farmers, faced with acres to plant by hand, used long-handled dibbles to plant wheat and other crops. It took two men about two days to plant an acre. Using a pair of dibbles, one man would walk backwards making holes about four inches apart, while a second man would drop a seed into each hole with one hand and cover it with soil using a dibble in the other hand.



Dibbles are composed of two parts. The working end, or spike, is round and pointed. Some dibbles have notches at regular intervals allowing you to make holes to a specific and consistent depth. Above that is a handle which may be straight, arched or a cross.

I like to give my dibbles straight handles with a large round knob at the top. This design allows the gardener to comfortably hold it no matter how it is used. It can be gripped the way you would an ice pick for stabbing the soil or like a flashlight for dragging a furrow. The sturdy knob allows you to comfortably put your weight behind it if you encounter hard soil.

I hand-turn my dibbles from salvaged wood. My Maple and Oak usually comes from found furniture that was beyond repair. When I see a broken baseball bat, I see two beautiful ash dibbles. Old patio furniture sometimes provides me with Teak and broken tool handles give me Hickory. Each of these woods will hold up to years of abuse.

HOW TO USE YOUR DIBBLE

Planting Bulbs or Transplanting. When creating a hole for planting, simply push the dibble straight down into the ground to the desired depth. Your dibble is marked in one inch increments. If necessary, swirl the dibble to enlarge the hole. Lift the dibble straight up to remove it. Now put the bulb or transplant in the hole. To cover your new planting, push the dibble into the ground beside the hole and rock it back and forth to push the dirt against the bulb or roots. Make two or three such holes around the perimeter of your new planting. This serves two purposes. First, it fills in the planting hole while leaving the soil loose, not compacted. Second, it creates holes that will collect rainwater and deliver it deep down to the plant's roots.

Planting Seeds. Using the graduated one-inch line markings, push your dibble into loose soil, to the depth desired, and pull it toward you, making a furrow on your planting line. Drop the seeds into the furrow using the dibble as a ruler to help space them evenly. Drag the dibble again on each side of the furrow to cover the seeds.

Dividing Perennials. You can use your dibble to gently divide perennials with minimal root damage. Just poke it into the root area and gently swirl it to part the roots.

Potted Plants. Your dibble is also useful for breaking the soil if it has developed a crust. This often happens over time in potted plants that contain commercial potting soil. The water can no longer penetrate the surface to reach the plant's roots. With your dibble, you can gently break up that crusty surface, allowing water to flow easily into the soil and making a healthier plant.

CARING FOR YOUR DIBBLE

After each use, wipe off your dibble with a damp rag and dry it. I suggest you wipe it down with linseed or mineral oil both at the beginning and end of the season.