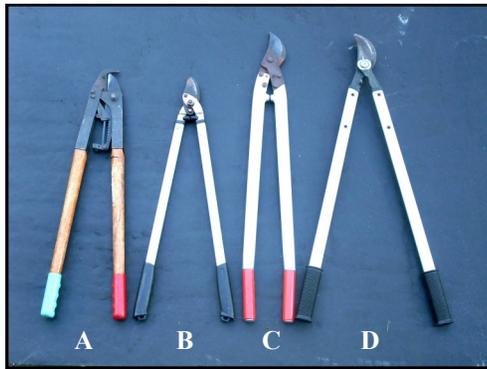


## A Comparison of Lopping Shears

by Charlie Beck

Every palm gardener needs a good pair of lopping shears. Lopping shears are great for pruning reachable desiccated fronds. There are two types of lopping shears – bypass and anvil. The bypass type cuts with an action like scissors. The anvil type shears cut like a bolt cutter where the blade and the anvil come in close contact but never meet.

I have bought many types of lopping shears over the years and would like to share some of my experience. The picture to the right shows four different lopping shears. The cost of these shears vary greatly.



A	Florian Maxi Lopper Anvil Ratchet Cut Retail: \$189 Cut Capacity: 2 inch diameter Length: 28 inches Weight: 3 lb. 8 oz.	C	Felco Model 22 Single Pivot Bypass Cut Retail: \$202 Discount \$131 Cut Capacity: 1.8 inch diameter Length: 33 inches Weight: 4 lb. 6 oz.
B	Village Blacksmith Compound Action Bypass Cut Retail: \$29 Cut Capacity: 1.6 inch diameter Length: 27 inches Weight: 2 lb. 10 oz.	D	Fred Marvin "Garden of Eden" Single Pivot Bypass Cut Retail: \$69 Discount: \$45 Cut Capacity: 2.25 inch diameter Length: 33 inches Weight: 3 lb. 8 oz.

Lopping shear A has a ratchet cut mechanism which greatly increases leverage. You have to repeatedly open and close the handles to complete the cut. When the handles open, they open widely and require a lot of clearance and, therefore, will not work in close quarters. The ratchet anvil system is designed to cut hardwood so it fails to cut springy palm petioles. This lopping shear often binds when cutting hard wood and it is difficult to complete the cut. The anvil blade requires precise alignment to operate properly. I do not recommend this lopping shear to the palm gardener.

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Lopping shear B is the typical box store offering. It has a bypass blade with a compound pivot mechanism. This compound system multiplies leverage but is prone to binding and is not as durable as a single pivot. The light weight is a positive feature but the cutting capacity is inadequate to cut through large fronds.

Lopping shear C is considered the king of professional lopping shears. All replacement parts are available for purchase online. The handles are solid aluminum. It is a heavy pruner but the durability is excellent. I have owned this pruner for 20 years

and it still works like new. When I cut through petioles like Coconut and Royals, I wedge one handle on the ground and use my body weight to complete the cut. Another positive feature of this shear is that the handles do not require as much space to open due to close proximity of the handles in the closed position. The hand grips are well attached and are very durable. This is a lopping shear which should last several lifetimes. The only drawback is that the cutting capacity could be a little larger.

Lopping shear D is one I bought recently because I misplaced my Felco in the garden. I didn't want to spend the \$131 Felco discount price because I know I would eventually find the lost lopping shear. I found this Fred Marvin pruner online for \$45 plus shipping. It has a whopping 2 ¼ inch cutting

capacity. The handles are hollow aluminum so I am not sure about their long term durability. The hand grips are a rubber compound and they occasionally slide on the aluminum handles. I've lost the rubber bumper which protects your hands from colliding when closing the handles but replacement bumpers are available online for \$2.50. Another drawback of this



Lopper D cutting through a Bismarkia frond with a single cut.

lopper is that the handles require ample room to open due to its generous spacing in the closed position. Even with all of the previously mentioned negative aspects, I would recommend this shear. The 2 ¼ inch cutting capacity is super and so far the handles have held up to my "ground contact – body weight" method of cutting. I'm not sure of its long term durability but so far – so good, and its \$45 price is very attractive.

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