Digging

A spade or fork are both used for digging or loosening the earth.

**Use a spade to:**
- dig and remove earth
- dig over a garden plot
- lift up plant roots without breaking them apart
- dig holes to plant shrubs and trees

In some circumstances, a fork will be more appropriate.

**Use a fork to:**
- dig with less damage to worms and soil
- avoid damaging crops such as potatoes when lifting out of the soil
- dig up weeds, sifting away soil from clumps to extract weed in one piece
- open up soil surface to lightly cultivate and work in compost/manure around plants

Rating: MODERATE

Garden tip
A spade has a broad flat blade with a sharp lower edge. It has rests for the feet to drive the spade into the ground.
**Technique**
- Keep the tool vertical, place the ball of your foot on the top of the spade or fork and use your body weight to push down.
- Once the spade or fork is deep enough, use your weight to lever the handle towards you.
- Stand with your feet wider than shoulder width apart, making sure your knees stay above your toes. Keep your core muscles braced throughout and your back straight - avoid hunching.
- Keep your knees slightly relaxed throughout and avoid locking your legs.
- Use your legs to lift, not your back. Switch sides regularly.

**Safety**
Use the ball of your foot and not the arch or heel. The arch is very tender and be injured if lots of pressure is put on it. Using your heel could cause injury if you slipped.
- Avoid kicking down or jumping on the tool with both feet.
- Position your feet carefully to avoid cutting them with spades or impaling them with forks.
- Wear appropriate footwear; sturdy or steel toe-capped boots.

**Main muscles used**
Quad, hamstrings, gastrocnemius, soleus, glutes, biceps, triceps, deltoids, forearms, core.