

Buying an Ax



New and Used Axes

Acquiring a good ax is almost as difficult today as learning to use one properly. The majority of American ax manufacturers have gone out of business; only a few are left in the United States. A few ax companies in other countries, including Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand, still manufacture quality axes. I have found the steel and fit of imported Chinese axes to be of very poor quality. These are often sold as generic “no name” axes at discount outlets. Let the buyer beware.

Buying a quality used ax at a secondhand store, flea market, or farm auction may be your best bet. Most used axes are also abused axes, but about 1 out of 10 is still usable. The price is usually right. Used axes can often be picked up for half the cost of a new ax. Look not only at the ax's condition, but take the ax's manufacturer and its head pattern into consideration. The quality of steel and the tempering of old axes is often superior to that of new axes (Figure 106). The helve or the handle is not of any importance at this point. Shop only for the ax head and plan to rehang it to fit your needs.

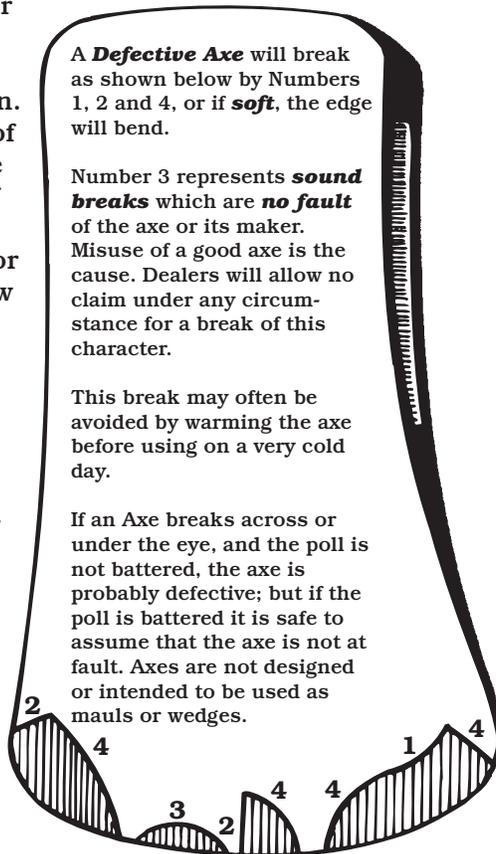


Figure 106—Telling if an ax is defective or abused (drawing courtesy of Snow & Nealley, Bangor, Maine).

Manufacturers

Ames/Woodings-Verona manufactures quality striking tools, including axes and hatchets. Woodings-Verona is a division of the much larger Ames Company.

World Wide Web: <http://www.ames.com>

Ames Lawn and Garden Tools
Box 1774
Parkersburg, WV 26102
Phone: (800) 624-2654 or (304) 424-3000
Fax: (304) 424-3399

Barco Industries, Inc., and sister company, Phoenix Forging Company, Inc., have a large line of striking tools, including axes and hatchets. These tools are marketed under the Barco name, as well as the registered trademarks Rocket, Kelly Perfect, Kelly Woodslasher, Woodslasher, and Light Duty.

Barco Industries, Inc.
1020 Macarthur Road
Reading, PA 19605
Phone: (800) 234-8665
Fax: (610) 374-6320

Bear Creek Tool Company specializes in hand-forged broadaxes and about 15 types of adzes. Their products have been used during a number of historical restoration projects. This is a small family operation owned by Charlie Wilkins.

Bear Creek Tool Company
201 North Bear Creek Road
Marshall, NC 28753
Phone: (828) 649-2671

Collins Axe Company is part of the Mann Edge Tool Company. The Collins name has been associated with axes since 1826. The company offers a broad line of axes and replacement handles. Mann Edge Tool Company supplies ax heads to other manufacturers to market under different labels. Collins offers professional quality, 100% USA-made striking tools.



Collins Axe Company
Water & Dorcas Streets
P.O. Box 351
Lewistown, PA 17044
Phone: (800) 248-8303 or (717) 248-9628
Fax: (717) 248-4846

Cooper Tools is a conglomerate that manufactures hammers, axes, and chisels under the well-known Plumb trademark. Cooper Tools also owns the Nicholson, Lufkin, and Crescent trademarks, among many others.

Cooper Tools
3535 Glenwood Avenue
P.O. Box 30110
Raleigh, NC 27622
Phone: (919) 781-7200
Fax: (919) 783-2116
E-mail: cooperinfo@coopertools.com

Council Tool Company was founded in 1886 by John Pickett Council who developed tools for the turpentine harvesting industry. Today Council products include a full line of quality axes and other tools.

Council Tool Company
345 Pecan Lane
P.O. Box 165
Lake Waccamaw, NC 28450-0165
Phone: (919) 646-3011
Fax: (910) 646-4414

Estwing Manufacturing Company offers a full line of axes, hatchets, and wood splitting tools. Most of these tools offer tubular or solid steel handles.

Estwing Manufacturing Company, Inc.
2647 8th Street
Rockford, IL 61109-1120
Phone: (815) 397-9558
Fax: (815) 397-8665
E-mail: sales@estwing.com

Gränsfors Bruks AB is a Swedish company established in 1902. The company offers a full line of hand-forged traditional and specialty axes and hatchets, each stamped with the initials of the craftsman who forged it.

A sister company, Gränsfors Bruks, Inc., is located in Summerville, South Carolina. It imports and markets Gränsfors Bruks axes and spring steel wrecking bars, in addition to other products.

World Wide Web: <http://www.gransfors.com>

Gränsfors Bruks AB
820 70 Bergsjö
SWEDEN
Phone: +46 (0) 6527-1090
Fax: +46 (0) 6521-4002
E-mail: axes@gransfors.com

Gränsfors Bruks, Inc.
821 West 5th North Street
P.O. Box 818
Summerville SC 29484
Phone: (800) 433-2863 or (843) 875-0240
Fax: (843) 821-2285
E-mail: info@gransfors.com

O.P. Link Handle Company is the largest manufacturer of hickory striking tool handles and farming tool handles in the United States. The Link family of handle makers operates factories in Salem, IN; Sequatchie, TN; Crossville, TN; and Hope, AR. The company can create almost any ax handle from the patterns shown in its catalog and from its inventory of less-popular handle patterns.

O.P. Link Handle Company
403 S. Main Street
Salem, IN 47167-1323
Phone: (800) 992-9171 or (812) 883-2981
Fax: (812) 883-1672

Peavey Manufacturing Company was founded in 1857 by Joseph Peavey, who developed the original "Peavey." Peavey does not manufacture axes, but it does make a host of log-moving and log-working tools and handles, including cant hooks, draw shaves, and its namesake tool, the Peavey.

World Wide Web: <http://www.peaveymfg.com>
E-mail: order@peaveymfg.com

Peavey Manufacturing Company
Route 9
P.O. Box 129
Eddington, ME 04428
Phone: (888) 244-0955 or (207) 843-7861
Fax: (207) 843-5005

Snow & Nealley, Brewer, ME, is a family-owned and operated business that has been producing high-quality axes and woodworking tools since 1864.

World Wide Web: <http://www.snowandnealley.com>

Snow and Nealley
609 Wilson St.
Brewer, ME 04412
Phone: (800) 933-6642
Fax: (207) 989-5654
E-mail: information@snowandnealley.com

Sandvik Saws and Tools Company has developed from a provincial Swedish steelworks into an international, materials engineering conglomerate. Milford, Bahco, Belzer, and Lindström are some of the brands now incorporated under the Sandvik Saws and Tools division. The company manufactures high-quality sharpening tools, saws, and forestry tools.

World Wide Web: <http://www.sandvik.com>

Sandvik Saws & Tools Company
P.O. Box 2036
Scranton, PA 18501
Phone: (800) 828-9893
Fax: (800) 877-5687

Tuatahi Axes and Saws in New Zealand grinds and manufactures premium quality axes and saws for export to countries all over the world. Much of its inventory is custom made. Products available include competition racing axes, work axes, crosscut racing saws, knives, and grubbers. Bailey's is the distributor for Tuatahi products in the United States.

Tuatahi Axes and Saws
203 High Street
Masterton

New Zealand
Phone: (011) 646-377-3728
Fax: (011) 646-377-5343

Bailey's
World Wide Web: <http://www.bbaileys.com>

Bailey's, Western Division
P.O. Box 550
44650 Highway 101
Laytonville, CA 95454
Phone: (707) 984-6133
Fax: (707) 984-8115
E-mail: baileys@bbaileys.com

Bailey's, Southeastern Division
P.O. Box 9088
196 Edwards Drive
Jackson, TN 38314
Phone: (901) 422-1300
Fax: (901) 422-6118
E-mail: baileys@bbaileys.com

Vaughan and Bushnell Mfg. Company offers a line of striking tools, axes, hammers, and hatchets.

World Wide Web: <http://www.vaughanmfg.com>

Vaughan and Bushnell Mfg. Company
11414 Maple Avenue
Hebron, IL 60034
Phone: (603) 224-4669
Fax: (815) 648-4300
E-mail: vaughanmfg@aol.com

Distributors

Ben Meadows Company carries several brands of axes and hatchets, as well as a wide selection of equipment for natural resource managers.

World Wide Web: <http://www.benmeadows.com>

Ben Meadows Company
3589 Broad Street
Atlanta, GA 30341
Phone: (800) 241-6401
Fax: (800) 628-2068



The Country Workshops has been providing instruction on Swedish carving techniques and other traditional woodworking skills since 1978. It also has an online store where axes, adzes, and other traditional woodworking tools can be purchased.

World Wide Web: <http://www.countryworkshops.org/toolhewing.html>

The Country Workshops
90 Mill Creek Road
Marshall, NC 28753-9321
Phone: (704) 656-2280
E-mail: langsner@countryworkshop.org

Forestry Suppliers, Inc., carries a large line of axes and hatchets from several manufacturers, as well as supplies for forestry, engineering, and environmental science.

World Wide Web: <http://www.forestry-suppliers.com>

Forestry Suppliers, Inc.
P.O. Box 8397
Jackson, MS 39284-9397
Phone: (800) 647-5368
Fax: (800) 543-4203

Garrett Wade Company offers a large selection of traditional woodworking products, including handtools, axes, and adzes.

World Wide Web: <http://www.garrettwade.com/home.html>

Garrett Wade Company
161 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013
Phone: (800) 221-2942
Fax: (800) 566-9525
E-mail: mail@garrettwade.com

Lee Valley Tools is another large supplier of traditional handtools, including axes, adzes, and log building tools. The company is based in Canada, but has an operation in the United States.

World Wide Web: <http://www.leevalley.com>

Lee Valley Tools, Ltd.
P.O. Box 1780
Ogdensburg, NY 13669-6780
Phone: (800) 871-8158
Fax: (800) 513-7885

Lester C. Kenway Trail Services, founded in 1994, features handtools by such companies as Snow & Nealley, Collins, Peavey, and Sandvick. It also specializes in rock-moving equipment.

Lester C. Kenway Trail Services
15 Westwood Road
Bangor, ME 04401
Phone: (207) 947-2723
Fax: (207) 945-6050
E-mail: trailser@ctel.net

Sticks & Stones Unlimited, Inc., distributes the machine-knife stone, Item No. SB-74. This 4- by 1¹/₂-inch oilstone has a groove cut into its circumference to help protect fingers from sharpened edges. This stone works well for sharpening axes as an alternative to the thinner, traditional round stone. The company distributes other stones and sharpening tools.

Sticks & Stones Unlimited, Inc.
1800 East Northwest Parkway
Southlake, TX 76092
Phone: (800) 966-7574 or (817) 488-9500
Fax: (817) 488-5397

Woodcraft, in business since 1928, is a good source for broadaxes, adzes, hatchets, and other woodworking tools.

World Wide Web: <http://www.woodcraft.com>

Woodcraft
210 Wood County Industrial Park
P.O. Box 1686
Parkersburg, WV 26102-1686
Phone: (800) 225-1153
Fax: (304) 428-8271

Organizations

Many organizations have been established for persons who collect or use old tools. The organizations typically publish newsletters and hold meetings to display, discuss, and trade tools. The two largest national tool collecting organizations in North America are the Early American Industries Association and the Mid-West Tool Collectors Association.

Early American Industries Association

c/o Elton Hall
167 Bakerville Road
South Dartmouth, MA 02748

World Wide Web: <http://www.eaiainfo.org>

The purpose of the Early American Industries Association, Inc., founded in 1933, is to encourage the study and better understanding of early American industries in the home, in the shop, on the farm, and on the sea; also to discover, identify, classify, preserve, and exhibit obsolete tools, implements, and mechanical devices that were used in early America. The association also offers its members a great selection of books at reduced prices.

Mid-West Tool Collectors Association

William R. Rigler, Treasurer
RR 2, Box 152
Wartrace, TN 37183

World Wide Web: <http://www.mwtca.org>

The Mid-West Tool Collectors Association is a nonprofit international organization dedicated to the study, preservation and understanding of the early tools, implements, and devices used by our ancestors in their homes, shops, on the farms and on the seas, and to a better perception of the industries and crafts in which these tools were used as well as the craftsmen who used them. M-WTCA was started by 16 Chicago-area tool collectors in 1968 and has grown to 3,900 members in all 50 states and 5 other countries.

Regional organizations (many more exist; these organizations are among the largest)

Pacific Northwest Tool Collectors (PNTC)

Jean Racine, Treasurer
12780 SW 231st Pl.
Hillsboro, OR 97123

Potomac Antique Tools and Industries Association, Inc. (PATINA)

Greg Wilinski, Sec./Treasurer
7007 Hundsford Lane
Springfield, VA 22153

Preserving Arts and Skills of the Trades (PAST) Tool Organization

Allan Foster, Membership Director
5200 Lawton Avenue
Oakland, CA 94618



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