



MINI-ROOT ASSASSIN

MSRP \$35.99

Root Assassin, LLC

888 Clubhouse Rd.

Woodmere, NY 11598

(844) 384-ROOT (7668)

info@rootassassinshovel.com

www.rootassassinshovel.com

Quality digging tools are not hard to find nowadays. In a trend started a few decades ago, nearly unbreakable hand-built diggers featuring the best in modern technology and craftsmanship are now readily available. But such handcrafted toughness comes at a hefty price. Most such tools are well worth it. But what about the detectorist on a budget who still wants a good digging tool that can do the job?

That genre has been recently tapped into, mostly by garden tool manufacturers who discovered their products were being used by an increasing number of metal detectorists. Although generally mass produced, such tools provide an affordable alternative for treasure hunters.

The Mini-Root Assassin is one such tool. The relatively light weight and functionality has made it a staple for some detectorists and after reviewing the one sent to us I can see why. At only 32" overall, the tool is easy to carry and quite adept at sinking a good plug of earth. Like most small shovels, it is not meant to move large amounts of earth, although it certainly can be used to do that in a pinch. But it is perfect for retrieving the targets that most mainstream detectorists

Mini-Root Assassin Specs

Total Length – 32"

Blade Length – 11"

Blade Width – 6" at top of step; tapers to 2" at bottom

Weight – 2 lbs.

Material – Industrial grade steel shaft & blade; Polypropylene & rubber grip D-handle

encounter.

Most impressive is the beefy sawtooth design. Unlike many such designs, these actually have a "set" to them, allowing the teeth to cut on both the push and pull stroke. This works great in small tangled roots but, as expected, thick roots prove more of a challenge.

Understand, our reviews were done as an out-of-the box test. Thus, the edges were not as sharp as we would have liked, having been powder coated after the edges were originally sharpened. It would be a simple matter to either file or grind an edge on each cutting surface. There is certainly enough "meat" on the saw teeth to do this, and the front edge would also benefit. With that being done, I'd expect this shovel to cut most roots as well or better than any similar ones on the market.

I liked the narrow tapered blade, which made it easy to dig between the roots it cannot easily cut. Anyone who has tried to dig next to a moderately-sized tree knows exactly what I am talking about: a wide spade just will not fit.

The blade and handle are two separate pieces of steel, fastened in two places with what looks to be a heavy and flawless weld.

The tool presented no problems in testing, although it had more flex than the more rigid (and expensive) hand-built diggers. Because of this, I hesitated to pry heavy rocks or attempt to break roots by sheer leverage. Still, I gritted my teeth on several occasions and did just that, with no sign of failure in the tool.

This is also a comfortable digger. The shoulders are wide enough to support my foot, and the forward-

turned step helped prevent slippage. I also liked the D-handle, which was a comfortable fit. The rubber coated grip on the plastic added greatly to the ergonomics.

Ironically, that comfortable handle also presents my biggest concern. It is riveted to the handle by one stainless steel rivet. Although our test unit never loosened or failed in any way, under hard use this might present a weak point. However, Root Assassin, LLC does offer a lifetime warranty (they will replace any damaged shovel), which tells me they are confident of their products' quality.

The tool performed as advertised and at \$35.99 (including free shipping in the continental U.S.), offers a viable alternative between a superstore \$12 spade and a \$99 custom-built model. While it is not an unbreakable end-all digger, is certainly is an affordable option, and is well worth the price.

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