

What?

- Scythe blades have been made in Austria since the Middle Ages when the Ottoman Empire established a metallurgy industry there.
- The factory at Rossleithen, where Schröckenfux blades are made, has been operating for over 500 years. Surprisingly, some of their blades are now made from English steel.
- These blades are hand-forged, wafer thin, to an elegant curve in all three dimensions which assists the cutting angle of the blade, prevents it digging into the ground and makes it easier to sharpen at the correct angle. They are much lighter than the Anglo-American blades, and this in turn means that the snath (handle) can be lighter.

Why?

- An Austrian scythe is suitable for cutting grass, weeds, forage (e.g. Lucerne and clover), grain crops, mowing lawns (Versailles was cut with scythes), cutting water weeds (common in rivers such as the Test and the Hampshire Avon) and the commercial harvesting of spinach. It is an important tool in meadow management (and a lot cleaner and quieter than the BCS mower!).
- Scythes need to be kept sharp and used with the appropriate techniques in order to achieve the best results and maintain a safe working environment.
- To sharpen the blade, please refer to Steve Tomlin's *'Learn to Scythe'* book, a copy of which is kept in the Open Country office.



Do ✓

- ✓ Always transport the scythe with a blade guard and secure to the minibus using clamps
- ✓ Check the site for any dangers
- ✓ Set the scythe up to the correct proportions of the user to prevent any over straining and to maximise efficiency
- ✓ Carry the scythe in your right hand so you can see the blade and it won't catch on anything to the side of you
- ✓ Learn how to sharpen the scythe and keep it sharp; carry a stone with you
- ✓ Keep the blade up and grip the top edge of the blade when standing with the scythe
- ✓ Work in straight lines
- ✓ Wear safety footwear and gloves

Don't ✗

- ✗ Don't let anyone else come near the scythe whilst in use, make sure others are stood well away so you have the space to swing it
- ✗ Don't force the scythe to cut, the blade probably needs sharpening
- ✗ Don't forget to take regular breaks and use the time to sharpen the blade



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