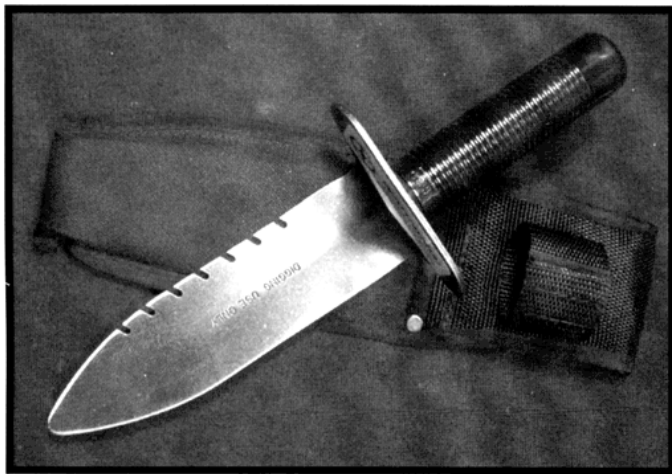


(Illustration courtesy of Library of Congress)



Predator Model 85 Digging Tool

These diggers have been used around the world, not just by metal detectorists, but also by gardeners, landscapers, and even the military for land mine removal. The latest crowning achievement was its use in the rescue efforts of the 911 disaster. Being made and designed by George Lesche, it's certain it would hold up under almost any such use, and it has.

Coming from the old e-tool school, I have never been one to take naturally to a hand digger, although I did often carry a WWII bayonet to use for the more precise digging (much to the horror of my WWII collecting friends). So, I confess that it was with great reluctance that I even did this field test, preferring to leave hand tool testing to those on our staff who use them religiously. But, with the staff whining that it was "my turn" to do the equipment test, I complied. Besides, what better test than by a person who doesn't care for hand diggers? Or at least, *used to* not care for them.

After dinging a bullet with my E Tool in some rocky ground near Kennesaw Mountain, I decided it was time to start the field test on the Model 85. My next target was buried under several roots, and while

the Predator isn't designed to chop roots, I found there was no need: The beauty of any small digging tool is that it can work around most such obstacles. While it did take some creative tunneling under the biggest root, ten minutes later a fired US Minie bullet fell into the bottom of the hole from its hiding place under the root.

The blade does have teeth on one side, but these seemed to be slow going on big roots (although perhaps sharpening them would help). Still, in a pinch, getting a root out of the way slowly is better than not getting it at all, especially when there might be a gold coin or Confederate buckle hiding under the root.

Nearby was a lawn that also held relics, and here I dared not use the e-tool at all. In the trim grass, the Model 85 shined, cutting a nice sod plug with little damage to the overall appearance of the lawn.

Two things I want in any accessories I carry into the field are light weight and durability. After a few hours in the woods with the Model 85, I scarcely noticed I was carrying it, and the strength speaks for itself, being designed and built by George Lesche.

The construction is no frills, but built to last. The hand guard is a must for anyone who's ever pinched their finger between a rock and their digging tool, and should prevent a few blood blisters and socially unacceptable words down the road. The handle is a straight grip molded plastic, meaning that you can grip it in whatever fashion you wish, a big plus over any tool handle with built-in finger grooves.

I also liked the snug fitting sheath, mainly because I tend to get forgetful about straps. This sheath is tough codura, and does have a Velcro hold down strap. Snug or not, it's always good to use such things to prevent loss. The unit feels compact and comfortable on a digging belt, and the relatively light weight adds to this comfort.

So, do I like this digger? Absolutely. Will this digger do it all? In a pinch, it will do most anything a bigger shovel will, although deep holes and thick roots might better be tackled with a spade and root saw. Will I carry this tool with me on my next trip? Yes...especially now, since someone stole my bayonet!

Predator Model 85 Specs:

Dimensions: 1 7/8" x 11 3/4" inches OA Length (7 1/4" inch blade)

Weight: 14 oz.

Designed and Built: by George Lesche of Predator Tools