

# Gardening Tips

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## Help ensure a healthy and pain free gardening season by following these simple tips...

The following guidelines can be easily incorporated into your gardening routine to help you keep a healthy back.

- Take it slow: Even if you think you are in shape, slightly different muscle activity can still make you sore. This can be especially true when doing a lot of planting and clean up both at the beginning of the season and in the fall. Remember, general muscle soreness from activity usually gets much better within 2 days. Pain lasting longer with the same intensity or feels worse should be looked at by a health professional to rule out injury.
- Use the right equipment: Using equipment that properly fits is vital. Take necessary precautions for exposure to the sun and wear functional supportive footwear. Orthotic appliances can correct altered foot mechanics that can help prevent foot, ankle, knee, hip, and lower back pain.
- Eat well and stay hydrated: A well balanced diet can go a long way to provide the needed energy for activity and allow for healthy weight loss. Be sure to take in plenty of fluids after activity, especially when outdoors.



## Gardening and Yard Work Tips

### Walk and Stretch before you start gardening.

Start with a short 10 to 15 minute walk. Perhaps walk to check out what your neighbors are putting in their gardens this year and how they are progressing. This gets the blood flowing and muscles more warmed up. When you get back, repeat each exercise below five times. Do not bounce, jerk, or strain. You should experience a gentle stretch of the muscle. Stop if you experience pain.

#### For your legs.



**Thigh stretch:** With one hand on the wall or a tree bend your left knee then reach back and hold your ankle with your right hand. If you cannot reach your ankle, put an old men's tie or rope loosely around your ankle and hold the ends in your hand in a comfortable position, without creating muscle strain. If you are wearing pants, grab your pant leg. Pull your heel toward your buttocks and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Relax and repeat with the other leg.



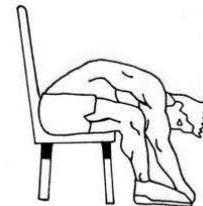
**Hamstring stretch:** Stand and reach your hands towards the sky. Bend forward at the waist and with both hands reach towards your toes. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, and then relax. This stretch can also be done in a seated position with your legs straight and heels resting lightly on a low stool or book.

### **For your back.**

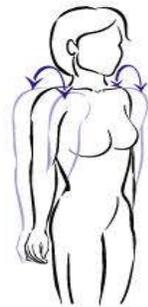


**Side stretches:** Stand and extend your arms above your head. Knit your fingers together, palms up or by grasping an old necktie or rope if it is more comfortable. Bend from the waist to one side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Then bend to the other side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. This stretch can also be done with one arm, alternating between arms.

**Back stretch:** Sit on a chair and slowly bend your body forward from your hips, putting your head down and resting your hands on the ground. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, and then relax.



### **For your arms and shoulders.**



**Body hugs:** Hug yourself snugly and slowly rotate at the waist as far as comfortable to one side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Then rotate to the other side and hold for 15 to 20 seconds.

**Shoulder rolls:** With your arms hanging loosely at your sides, slowly and smoothly rotate your shoulders in a circular motion forward, then backward.

### **For your wrists.**

**Wrist Flexion:** Hold one arm straight out in front of you, with the palm flat and facing down. Bend your wrist until the fingers point down toward the ground. Use your opposite hand to hold this position. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the other hand.



**Wrist Extension:** Hold one arm straight out in front of you, with the palm facing out, as if you were giving a stop signal, and use



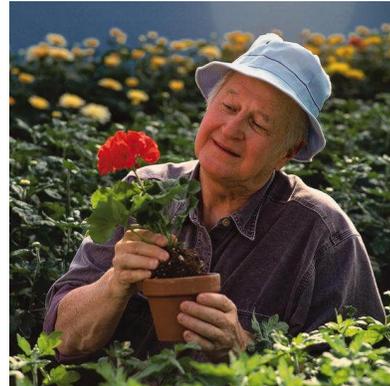
your opposite hand to hold this position. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the other hand.

## **Get in the groove with the right tools and moves.**

### **The right moves.**

Alternate your tasks: Take turns alternating between heavy chores such as digging and light, less physically demanding tasks such as planting.

Do the scissors when you rake: Raking can put significant strain on your back and arms. So take extra care with this activity. Stand with one leg forward and one leg back when you rake. Switch legs and hands every few minutes. Pause every few minutes to rest and stretch.



Change hands often: Changing hands frequently when you rake, hoe, or dig prevents muscle strain on one side of the body. Stand as straight as possible with your head upright.

Kneel to plant and weed: Constant bending can put strain on your back, neck, and leg muscles and joints, so kneeling is recommended. Use kneepads or a kneeling mat with handles to minimize the amount of bending required, and to make kneeling more comfortable.

Change positions frequently: Once you begin, make a point of changing position every 10 to 15 minutes. Move from kneeling to standing, from digging to planting.

Pace yourself: A minimum of 3 brief breaks each hour is recommended. Take a few moments to move around, stretch your muscles, have a drink, or simply sit and enjoy the work you have done. Spread the work over several days. You will still achieve the same great results and your back will really thank you for it!

### **The right tools.**

Lighten your load...

- A garden hose is easier to manage than a watering can.
- Invest in a good cart or dolly to make moving heavier loads a breeze.
- Buy a lightweight wheelbarrow with two wheels for extra stability and control.
- Break large loads into several smaller units.



Choose well-designed, comfortable tools...

- Ensure that tools are a comfortable weight and size for you.
- Select the right tool for the job.
- Look for ergonomically designed items with padded handles and spring action mechanisms.
- Use long-handled, lightweight tools to help you avoid bending and twisting as you work.

Remember to wear comfortable, thick-soled, protective shoes that support your arches to reduce back pain and aching muscles. Also be sure to take the necessary precautions regarding exposure to the sun and have a great season!

Dr. Lanett is a chiropractor dedicated to providing clients with natural, gentle, evidence based health care in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Services include: chiropractic treatment; soft tissue therapy; massage therapy on-site; semi-custom orthotic inserts; nutritional counseling; and rehabilitation. Posture advice to support the spine and relieve stress is a key element in patient care success!