

Gardening

Common gardening activities, such as digging, planting, weeding, mulching, and raking can cause stress and strain on muscles and joints. This is especially true for senior citizens and people who are normally sedentary. Different body areas such as the shoulders, neck, back, and knees can be vulnerable to injury during gardening. The following tips can help minimize or prevent injuries:



- Warm up before you garden. A 10 minute brisk walk and stretches for the spine and limbs are good ways to warm up.
- Change positions frequently to avoid stiffness or cramping.
- Be aware of how your body feels as you work in your garden. If a part of your body starts to ache, take a break, stretch that body part in the opposite direction it was in, or switch to a different gardening activity. For example, if you've been leaning forward for more than a few minutes, and your back starts to ache, slowly stand up, and gently lean backwards a few times.
- Make use of a garden cart or wheelbarrow to move heavy planting materials or tools. Be sure to keep your back straight while using a wheelbarrow.
- If kneeling on both knees causes discomfort in your back, try kneeling on one and keep the other foot on the ground. Use knee pads or a gardening pad when kneeling.
- If kneeling or leaning down to the ground causes significant pain in your back or knees, consider using elevated planters to do your gardening.
- Use good body mechanics when you pick something up or pull on something, such as a weed. Bend your knees, tighten your abdominals, and keep your back straight as you lift or pull things. Avoid twisting your spine or knees when moving things to the side; instead, move your feet or pivot on your toes to turn your full body as one unit.
- Avoid bending your wrist upwards when pulling things or using gardening tools. Instead, keep your wrist straight and use your shoulder muscles to pull and lift.
- End your gardening session with some gentle backward bending of your low back, a short walk and light stretching, similar to stretches done before starting.