

# Seven Tips for Gardening Safely



Before you rush outside to start tending your garden, be sure to consider ways to decrease aches, pains, and strains while participating in this popular leisure activity.

The following helpful tips can make gardening easier and more comfortable, even if you have physical limitations:

- **Warm up before you begin** - Get your heart rate up by taking a short walk followed by some stretches for your back, neck, arms, and legs.
- **Protect your joints** - Choose tools with padded handles to protect the joints in your hands and fingers from excess pressure. Tools like shears or clippers with spring-action, self-opening features are helpful if you have a weak grasp. Padded work gloves are also a good option.
- **Conserve energy** - Sit while you're working to conserve energy and decrease stress on your back, knees, and hips. Consider using a kneeler seat, which is a combination kneeling platform and seat that helps you rise from a kneeling or seated position. Take rest breaks and stop work before you become overtired.
- **Limit lifting** - Be wary of those heavy bags of soil, mulch, or fertilizer. Instead of moving the whole bag, divide it into smaller, more manageable loads and use a cart or wagon to move materials. When lifting, always use the muscles in your legs and not your back. For heavier tasks, ask for help or hire someone to help you.
- **Think small** - Start with a small garden area that you can manage without excess exertion. Locate it close to your house and a water supply to reduce hauling long lengths of garden hose. Consider switching to a lightweight garden hose or a coiled hose, which will reduce the stress and wear on your body.
- **Mix it up** - Vary your tasks to avoid overstressing any one part of your body. Tightly gripping or pinching a tool for extended periods of time can cause swelling in the hands and arms. Hunching over or kneeling for prolonged periods can cause back strain and knee pain. Change your position frequently to keep from becoming stiff.
- **Cool down** - End your gardening session with a short walk or some light stretching.

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