

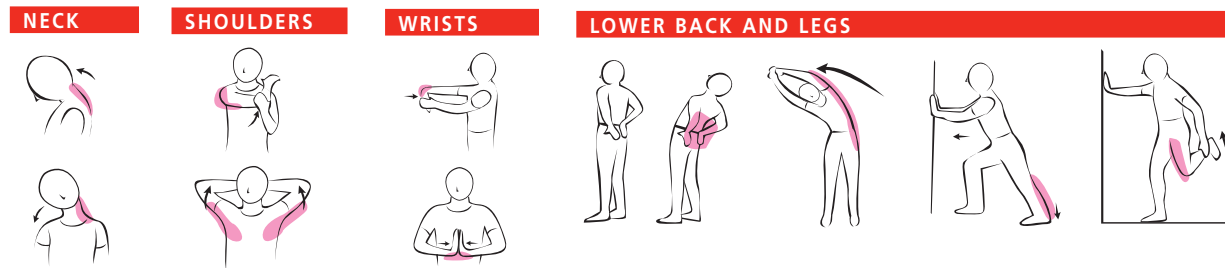


GARDENING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Proper movements and tools will extend your gardening season

The secret to a healthy garden is a healthy gardener. Gardening is an active pursuit that can cause muscle strain to the lower back, shoulders, knees and arms, especially if you are out of shape and do not move properly. To get the most of your gardening season, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) recommends gardeners follow the following tips and techniques.

A “warm up” before you start your gardening workout helps to reduce muscle strain, injury and fatigue. Do some shoulder circles, trunk rotation, and heel / toe standing. You might even ‘rehearse’ movements, like raking, as part of your warm-up. Then, take a few minutes to do the following stretches, and repeat them again at the end of your gardening activity. If you begin to feel a bit stiff while gardening, pause and do more stretches.



When RAKING OR HOEING – keep your tools close to your body and your back straight to reduce strain. Use your arms and avoid twisting your trunk. Use long-handled tools suited to your height.

- If you tend to bend over or reach too far while raking, consider using an ergonomic rake (available at garden centres). It will make the job easier and reduce strain to your back.

When WEEDING OR PLANTING – do not bend from the waist. Squat or kneel on a kneeling pad. If you have difficulty getting up, use a kneeling pad / bench with a support handle for assistance.

- Give your back, legs and knees a break from stooping and kneeling by using tools with long handles to help with the weeding;
- Squat or sit on the ground to trowel, rather than bending over.

When DIGGING OR SHOVELLING – insert the head of the shovel vertically into the ground and step on the blade. Lift small amounts at a time. Keep your back straight and bend at the knees. Avoid twisting. Use a wheelbarrow to move big or heavy loads.

- Choose a shovel with a weight and handle length that is appropriate for your size and for the job you are doing;
- Give your back a break by using a smaller shovel, reducing the temptation to lift large amounts of soil;
- Spread heavy lifting and digging tasks over a week rather than a weekend, and spread major projects throughout the seasons. Take time to recover between them.

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S This information sheet is part of the CPA's **S.M.A.R.T.** approach to your mobility (focusing on **Stretching, Moving, Adding it up, Reducing Strain** and **Talking to a physiotherapist**). The information provided is intended for general use and is not meant to substitute for the professional, personal assessment your physiotherapist offers.

1 Cette fiche de renseignements fait partie du programme de l'ACP « **cinq points** pour assurer votre liberté de mouvement » (**1. Étirez-vous; 2. Bougez; 3. Additionnez les minutes; 4. Réduisez la fatigue; 5. Consultez un physiothérapeute**).

2 Ces renseignements sont fournis à titre général seulement et ne prétendent pas remplacer l'évaluation professionnelle, personnalisée offerte par votre physiothérapeute.

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cont'd: GARDENING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

When LIFTING OR CARRYING – know your limits and lift properly: bend your knees, not your back. Keep the load close to your body. Don't lift items that are too heavy for you to handle – get help! Use a wagon or wheelbarrow to transport supplies and / or to move or carry heavy items.

- A four-wheeled cart is sturdier and easier to use than a wheelbarrow;
- Lift with your knees slightly bent and your back straight. Avoid twisting or reaching.

When PRUNING or TRIMMING – get as close to your work as possible. Don't stretch beyond your reach or past your stable footing. Rehearse the movement as a stretch first to test your ability and positioning.

- Match the size of the gardening tool handle to the size of your hand. Choose tools that you can hold so that your hand remains positioned in line with your forearm;
- Hold your tools in a loose comfortable grip. Holding too tightly may cause injury;
- Be creative! Adapt or create your tools for ease and comfort:
 - Pad the handles of your gardening tools;
 - Use knee pads or a foam pad for kneeling; and
 - Wrap a slippery handle with tape to improve your grip (hockey stick tape will do).

Selecting the right tool, for the right task, for the right gardener, is critical to creating a beautiful garden safely. Here are a few additional tips for fitting the tool to the gardener:

- Tools with larger, padded handles are more comfortable for gardeners with painful or arthritic hands. Enlarge tool handles with grip-tape or foam tubing purchased at a hardware store.
- Tools with tubular steel rather than wood are more lightweight and may be easier to use.
- Use a potting bench or a counter top where possible to prevent unnecessary bending.
- Wear a gardening apron with several pockets for carrying tools frequently used, or keep them close at hand, to avoid reaching or twisting for the tool you need.
- Wear gardening gloves to protect your hands and joints.
- Keep tools (such as your pruners) sharp to make cutting easier.
- **Talk to a physiotherapist:** Most of the aches and pains gardeners experience can be prevented. Physiotherapists have the education, applied knowledge and skill to help you keep your gardening pain-free and fun. Enjoy the fruits of your labour. Don't be limited by the aches and pains!

Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity.

How do I find a physiotherapist?

Finding a physiotherapist may vary from province to province. Here are some suggestions:

- Check the yellow pages of your local telephone book for listings of physiotherapists and physiotherapy clinics. You can make an appointment with a physiotherapist directly anywhere in Canada.
- Ask for a recommendation from your family doctor. While a direct referral is not necessary, your physician may be able to suggest a physiotherapist for your particular concern. Further, while many physiotherapy services are covered by provincial health care plans, Workers Compensation plans and private insurance, some insurance plans require a doctor's referral for reimbursement.
- Visit the web site of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) at www.physiotherapy.ca to access our "Find A Physiotherapist" directory and to find out more information about physiotherapy. The CPA web site can also link you to resources for finding physiotherapists through provincial association branches and regulatory colleges.