

Fit for Gardening

Every week thousands of Australians hit their yards and gardens in weekend splurges of planting, weeding and landscaping. Sore necks, backs, knees and muscles can occur after these spurts of activity.

Physiotherapy and Gardening

What does physiotherapy have to do with gardening?

Physiotherapists have the education and applied knowledge to offer techniques people can use when gardening that may help prevent the aches, pains, sprains and breaks often associated with such a physically intensive activity. With a few tips and preventable measures, such as stretching, pacing your activity and proper lifting, physiotherapists can keep gardeners moving. Most gardening related injuries are preventable, and physiotherapists know how to help.

Gardening is one of the best activities for keeping you **FRESH!**

By maintaining good:

- Flexibility
- Range of motion
- Endurance
- Strength
- Healthy living

Know your Limits

Work within your physical strength. Occupational Health Standards list safe lifting loads as: 29 Kg for middle aged men and 13 Kg for women, but a safe lift is less than this when the load is:

- Low to the ground or overhead.
- Deep in a wheelbarrow or bucket or difficult to reach.
- An awkward shape.
- A warm up before you start your gardening work out helps to reduce muscle strain injury and fatigue. March on the spot until you feel warm, and then take a few minutes to stretch (see back page). Repeat the stretches again at the end of your activity.





When stretching:

- Movements should be slow and controlled.
- You should feel a gentle stretch of the muscle – stretching should not be painful.
- Once you feel a stretch, hold the position 10-15 seconds – do not bounce or jerk.
- Repeat each stretch 2 or 3 times.

Pace yourself

- Take a break when you're tired.
- Spread heavy lifting and digging tasks over a week rather than a weekend.
- Spread out major projects.
- Take time to recover between projects.
- Rotate tasks to avoid over – use injuries by working in different positions and by doing different activities throughout the day.
- Remember to protect yourself from the sun and to drink plenty of fluids.

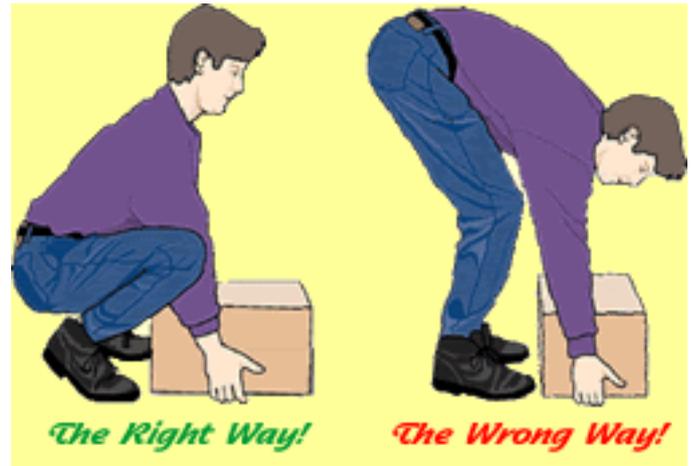


Gardening Safety Tips

Find your "easyzone" – a comfortable posture for your body to work in. Avoid "out of zone" postures by:

- Keep your work in front of and close to your body to avoid reaching and twisting.
- Using tools to assist you.
- Positioning your body at the height of your work.
- Moving with your work.

"Position" Yourself for Success



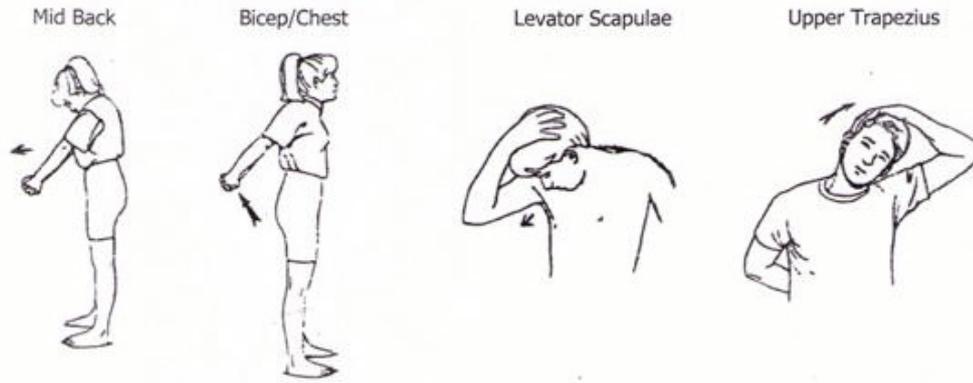
Tools of the Trade

- Use tools to reduce work.
- Match the size of the gardening tool handle to the size of your hand.
- Hold your tools in a loose comfortable grip. Holding too tight may cause injury.
- Use a wheelbarrow or wagon to transport supplies.
- Use power tools for repetitive work.
- Use an extended handle to reduce the reach.
- Keep digging and cutting tools sharp.
- Consider using a low, padded kneeling stool, with side handles to help you stand up, when working at ground level.
- Use knee pads or a foam pad for kneeling.
- Wear gloves.
- Wrap a slippery handle with sports tape to improve your grip on it.



Stretches for the Gardener

Neck & Upper Back Stretches



Side/Back Stretches



Shoulder Stretches



For more information on stretches and other exercises for the gardener please ask your physiotherapist.

Remember

- Seek treatment at an early stage
- Ensure your physiotherapist provides you with methods of self treatment.

If you have any questions regarding this information or your physiotherapy management, please don't hesitate to call Physiocare on 07 5443 5695.

