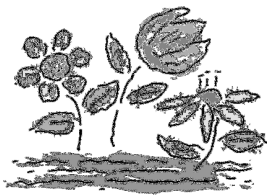




Making Your Garden Grow How to Enjoy Your Garden and Prevent Injuries



Gardening is an activity that brings pleasure to many adults. Drive through any neighborhood and you will see people energetically planting, trimming, raking and mulching their gardens. Often as we try to whip our gardens into shape we underestimate our physical abilities. Later that evening or the next day we feel pain and stiffness in our neck, back, shoulders, elbows, wrists and knees. Is it possible to enjoy the fruits, flowers and vegetables of your labor and minimize the discomfort or pain that you feel afterwards? The answer is yes, especially if you use the following tips:

- ❖ **Treat gardening as a sport.** Warm up by stretching the most frequent used muscles in your body, as you would before a sports activity.
- ❖ **Carefully plan how much time and realistically how much you can accomplish.** Most injuries occur from doing too much too quickly.
- ❖ **Keep in mind good body mechanics.** Carefully lift heavy bags of dirt and mulch by keeping your back straight, bending at the knees and lifting with your legs while keeping the bag as close to your body as possible. When digging with a shovel lift the dirt and turn your entire body to empty it. Avoid lifting, twisting and throwing the dirt especially if the ground is wet or the soil is composed of clay.
- ❖ **Rotate activities to use different muscle groups.** Frequently changing your activities helps to minimize the repetitive stress placed on the joints of your spine, extremities and the adjacent muscles.
- ❖ **Use a cushion, stool or small bench when weeding.** This helps to reduce the stress placed on your knees and spine.
- ❖ **Take frequent breaks.** Every 30 minutes, take a few minutes to stretch, get a drink of water and enjoy your efforts.
- ❖ **Stop gardening if you feel pain or become fatigued.** Apply ice to affected areas for 15-20 minute periods to help reduce inflammation. DO NOT USE HEAT - it will increase the inflammatory process. If pain persists, call your physician.
- ❖ **For people with chronic pain, use adaptive tools.** People with low back pain and knee pain can turn to platform gardening using an elevated planting bed to help avoid bending and kneeling.

Adapted from an article by Dr. William Madosky, Richmond Heights, Missouri in Parish Nurse Perspectives, Volume 5, Issue 2. Dr. Madosky gave permission for use by parish nurses.

A Kiss of the Sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a GARDEN,
Than anywhere else on earth.



Spring Blessings!

Jenny Boyce RN, PN

Parish Nurse at Our Savior's Lutheran Church
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Blood Pressure Screening:
Sun., May 18 9:00 AM

Office Hours
Tuesday 1-3 p.m.