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*Gardening can improve strength and endurance, reduce stress, and provide a sense of purpose. However, it also carries with it the risk of pain and potential serious injury. Below are some tips to help reduce the risk of injury associated with gardening.*

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### WARM UP & STRETCH

- Before gardening, warm up with a 10 minute walk
- Gentle neck stretches
  - Rotate side to side
  - Bend ear to shoulder
- Shoulder stretches
  - Pull arm across chest
  - Reach behind head with both hands
- Trunk stretches
  - Side bends
  - Rotate side to side
- Wrist stretches
  - Flex and extend
  - Circles
- Standing lower body stretches
  - Hamstring
  - Achilles
  - Quadriceps
- After prolonged forward bending, stand slowly and gently lean backward to stretch the low back

### PROPER ERGONOMICS

- Use a cart or wheelbarrow to move heavy material or tools, don't overfill
- Lift with your knees, keep your abdominal muscles tight and back straight
- Avoid heavy lifting immediately after bending or kneeling, and when possible avoid prolonged bending
- Use knee pads or a gardening pad for prolonged kneeling
- Use elevated planters to avoid forward bending and kneeling
- Maintain good posture
- Move your feet to turn your body, avoid twisting movements
- Push instead of pulling when able
- Hold objects with thumb up and wrist straight
- Carry objects close to the body
- Use a chair, gardening stool or upside down bucket to sit while gardening
- Maintain the natural curve in your low back while raking
- Alternate the forward hand when shoveling or raking
- Avoid locking your knees

### OTHER HELPFUL HINTS

- Change positions frequently to avoid stiffness, avoid prolonged or repetitive tasks
- Listen to your body and take a break when you notice aches or pains
- Alternate between light and heavy tasks
- Use light weight, long handled tools
- Use seamless well fitting gloves to reduce grip strain
- Wear supportive shoes on uneven terrain, avoid slip-on shoes without backs
- Ask for assistance with awkward or heavy activities
- Keep moving after you finish gardening, go for a walk and perform light stretches

The stretching exercises provided here are general recommendations and may not benefit all individuals. If you sustain a gardening injury, seek medical advice, and consider a physical therapy