Get Back in the Garden Gardening with Back Pain





Just because you experience back pain doesn't mean you have to give up gardening. Use these tips, tools and techniques to optimize your experience in the garden.

The right tools for the job

Make sure your tools are the appropriate size. Choose a hoe, cultivator, and rake that you can maneuver comfortably without bending. Many tools are now available that can help to reduce the back pain associated with gardening.

- Benches and kneelers can help reduce the pain of standing for long periods.
- Watering wands can reduce the stress associated with over-reaching.
- Long-reach garden tools have ergonomically angled handles that keep the hand and wrist in a natural and comfortable position, while the length of the tool eliminates the strain on the back and shoulders.
- Bring the plants to you by raising your workspace from ground level to waist-high with a raised garden bed. This will reduce the amount of bending required to care for your plants.
- Stretching before, during and after gardening will help keep muscles from becoming stiff.







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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION University of Arkansas System







Gardening and Back Pain

Posture

Back pain, whether caused by muscle aches or a herniated disk, can make gardening a difficult task. Knowing how to position yourself correctly when doing garden chores, such as raking, shoveling or hoeing can help prevent the aggravation of a back injury.

Standing

- Stand with your weight equally distributed on both feet.
- Wear flat or low-heeled shoes if you stand for long periods of time.
- Keep your back straight by tightening your stomach muscles and buttocks, and by doing a pelvic tilt.

Sitting

- Keep stomach muscles pulled in and maintain the proper curve in your lower back. You can do this by tightening your stomach muscles and buttocks.
- Keep your knees slightly higher than your hips. Use a footstool under your feet, if necessary.
- Don't sit for long periods of time. Stand up and move around periodically to stretch tight muscles and give them a chance to relax.

Additional Tips

- Long-handled tools can make work easier by extending your reach and reducing the body movement necessary to complete a task.
- Lightweight and small-bladed tools can reduce the amount of load and resistance.
- Stand as close to the work area as possible and use your arms and legs to do the work instead of your back.
- Be conscious of the twisting motion that can be produced when throwing mulch or shoveling soil as it can cause back strains.



Lifting

- Face your work when lifting or carrying heavy objects.
- Squat and hold the object close to you.
- Straighten your legs to lift the object.
- Get help to lift objects that are too heavy.



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