

Healthy
Living



Health Tips for Gardeners

As springtime approaches, weather warms up and leaves turn green, many people will spend more time outside planting bulbs, mowing the lawn and pulling weeds. Gardening can provide a great workout, but with all the bending, twisting, reaching, and pulling, your body may not be ready for exercise of the garden variety.

It is important to stretch your muscles before reaching for your gardening tools. The back, upper legs, shoulders, and wrists are all major muscle groups affected when using your green thumb.

“A warm-up and cool-down period are as important in gardening as they are for any other physical activity,” said Scott Bautch, DC, of the American Chiropractic Association (ACA) Council on Occupational Health. “Performing simple stretches during these periods will help alleviate injuries, pain and stiffness.”



Garden Fitness Stretches

Try the following stretches to help alleviate muscle pain after a day spent in your garden:



Before stretching for any activity, breathe in and out, slowly and rhythmically; do not bounce or jerk your body, and stretch as far and as comfortably as you can. Do not follow the “no pain, no gain” rule. Stretching should not be painful.



While sitting, prop your heel on a stool or step, keeping the knees straight. Lean forward, keeping the spine in alignment (no bending or slumping), until you feel a stretch in the back of the thigh or the hamstring muscle. Hold this position for 15 seconds. Do this once more and repeat with the other leg.



Stand up, balance yourself, and grab the front of your ankle from behind. While keeping your spine in alignment, pull your heel toward your buttocks and hold the position for 15 seconds. Do this again and repeat with the other leg.



While standing, weave your fingers together above your head with the palms up. Lean to one side for 10 seconds, then to the other. Repeat this stretch three times.



Do the “Hug your best friend.” Wrap your arms around yourself and rotate to one side, stretching as far as you can comfortably go. Hold for 10 seconds and reverse. Repeat two or three times.

Finally, be aware of your technique and your body’s form and posture while gardening. Kneel, do not bend, and alternate your stance and movements frequently.

After the Bulbs Are Planted

If you feel muscle aches and pains after working in the garden, there are ways to alleviate discomfort. Apply a cold pack or a heat pack (your preference) on the area of pain and consider making an appointment with a doctor of chiropractic.

For more information on prevention and wellness, or to find a doctor of chiropractic near you, visit

www.HandsDownBetter.org



Copyright © American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and reviewed by the ACA Editorial Advisory Board. This information is for educational purposes. It is not a replacement for treatment or consultation with a healthcare professional. If you have specific questions, contact your doctor of chiropractic. This page may be reproduced noncommercially by healthcare professionals to educate patients. Any other reproduction is subject to ACA approval.