

Tips for gardening without pain

Question: Is there a wrong way and right way to garden, because my low back aches after pulling weeds and planting.

Answer: The physicality of gardening is often underestimated. A recent study of chiropractors demonstrated that gardening this time of year, is the number one cause for new patient entrance complaints. Whether it is vegetables, fruits or flowers, a garden still has to be weeded, watered and fertilized. Seedlings have to be re-potted into larger and heavier containers and all this means bending, stretching, and pulling. This can cause muscle injury if precautions are not taken.

The main cause of back pain when gardening relates to overuse of the ligaments and joints in the spine particularly in the lower lumbar spine which can become inflamed and tender. This in turn may trigger a protective muscle spasm, which gives rise to a deeper, duller achy type of pain that occurs over the next few days.

Here are some tips for healthier gardening: Don't just jump into your gardening. Prepare with some general full body stretching with additional concentration on the legs and low back. Don't work too long in any one position. Change positions by altering tasks and activities. Periodically stop working and stretch your neck, back, shoulders and legs. Take extra trips when moving dirt, pots, plants etc. Use lighter loads and more trips if necessary, avoiding overstraining of muscles. Do a cool down stretching routine also. Utilize longer handled tools to keep from bending while digging. When lifting keep the load

close to the body, bend your knees, and keep your spine as straight as possible. Avoid bending repeatedly while standing upright when performing ground-level work like weeding. Kneeling or using a gardening bench is safer for your back.

Any continued discomfort to your back after gardening should be checked immediately by your chiropractor.

Quote of the week: *“You are a reflection of your own environment.”* – Dr.

Steven Pollack