



Just because you suffer from arthritis doesn't mean you have to give up gardening. Once you have consulted with your physician regarding your specific health condition, use these tips, tools and techniques to optimize your experience in the garden.

The right tools for the job

Choosing the right tools can make a big difference in your gardening experience.

Ergonomic tools feature specially shaped handles that help keep your body in a neutral position, which eases stress on your joints.



Telescoping handles extend your reach. This can be less tiring on your back and hands. The forearm grip can give you additional leverage when digging or weeding.



Garden stools and kneelers can help with knee and back pain.

- Gardening stools with locking wheels help with mobility and prevent repeated standing and sitting.
- Combination stools can also be used as a kneeler with "handles" to assist you when standing.



For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service or visit www.uaex.edu

Gardening and Arthritis

Gardening is a great activity for maintaining joint flexibility, bone density, range of motion and quality of life. Before you begin working in your garden, warm up your joints and muscles with a brief walk and some stretching. Work during the time of day that you feel best. For example, if you feel stiff in the morning, then save gardening activities for the afternoon.

Use low-maintenance plants that require less care, such as perennials instead of annuals, especially in hard-to-reach areas of the garden. Weed the garden after irrigating or rain, as moist soil makes it easier to pull weeds with less resistance. You can use wood mulch to reduce weeds and watering.

Wear gloves to protect hands from sun damage, temperatures, and to cushion joints from tools.

Joint Protection Tips

- Respect pain.
- Avoid stressful positions.
- Change positions frequently.
- Use your largest, strongest joints and muscles for a task.
- Use splints and helpful devices if necessary.
- Take periodic breaks every hour to reduce overuse.
- Get help from another individual if a task is too difficult.
- Pace yourself.
- Do stretches before, during and after gardening to reduce joint and muscle stiffness.

REMEMBER!



- If you feel severe pain, stop working and rest before attempting again.
- If you are in pain the day after gardening, reduce the amount of activity you do the next time.
- A warm bath can help relax stiff or sore muscles after gardening.
- Heat and cold therapy can be helpful in easing joint pain. Check with your physician and visit www.arthritis.org for more information on which therapy is best for your type of pain.
- Always talk to your health-care provider if pain persists.

