

## SAFE GARDENING TIPS for SPRING 2014

The secret to a healthy garden is a healthy gardener. Gardening is an active pursuit that can cause muscle strain to the lower back, shoulders, knees and arms, especially if you are out of shape and do not move as freely. To get the most out of your gardening season, and before you tackle those flower beds, please take a look at the following tips to help keep you injury free this spring.



- Warm up and stretch the muscles for 15 minutes before beginning a garden chore. You will find that you can garden longer and better if you stretch.
- When raking, hoeing and weeding, keep the back straight and feet shoulder-width apart. Avoid reaching with a garden tool; keep it close to your body. If you reach the point where the back is no longer straight, move and stand closer to the work area.
- Use a low stool, squat or kneel with pad to help avoid bending over.
- Turn your feet and entire body rather than twisting or turning your back.

Alternate which side of the body you use. Pull with right hand and then switch to pulling with left hand.

- Lift objects by bending at the knees, not at the waist.
- Make your tools work for you. Clean, sharp tools in proper working order are easier to use. Take advantage of tools with long handles so you don't have to stoop or bend as much.
- Many gardening chores involve kneeling. Constant up and down movement puts stress on the knees. Foam kneeling pads, at least an inch thick, provide some protection.
- Pace yourself and take regular breaks. Setting a timer to go off every 15-20 minutes can act as a reminder. When the timer goes off, stop, rest and drink some water.
- When muscles feel sore or tired, stop and take a rest. Vary the gardening activity, switching to a different chore every 15 minutes. Switch to a different location, a different activity or just relax for a while.
- If you muscles or joint pain does not settle with taking good care of yourself in these ways, please feel free to contact us for more information. Most of the aches and pains gardeners experience can be prevented. Physiotherapists have the education, applied knowledge and skill to help you keep your gardening pain-free and fun. Enjoy the fruits of your labour. Don't be limited by the aches and pains!

### NECK



### SHOULDERS



### WRISTS



### LOWER BACK AND LEGS

