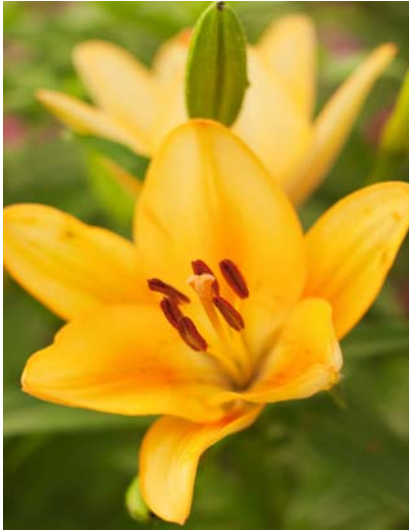


# Gardening Tips



*We are always trying to help you get back to health here at Sheffield Osteopathic Clinic, so we have produced an advice sheet for those of you who are keen gardeners.*

Gardening is supposed to be a rewarding exercise, whether the result is a pleasant place to be, veggies, flowers or a combination, gardeners frequently overdo things and a day in the garden can often lead to a series of visits to our practice for osteopathic treatment or massage. Avoiding this can be achieved providing a few guidelines are followed.

**Gardening** is often heavy work and being too keen to complete a project can be costly in terms of pain and time off work with an injury. An injury early in the season might prevent you making the most of your garden. This can be avoided with some forethought and planning with regard to the following. . .

**Warm up.** Use stretching exercises and start tackling the light jobs that do not require much bending.

Try to have several tasks on the go at one time and do not spend more than 20 minutes on any particular job. E.g. start by mowing the lawn, then digging, then a little pruning followed by a rest and a drink. Changing jobs exercises different groups of muscles.

**Wear suitable clothing.** Avoid tight clothing that restricts bending at the knee and the hips and reduces circulation. Wrap up warmly to keep circulation going and always put warm clothes back on after any exertion.

**Watering.** Watering cans are very heavy when filled. Lifting a full watering can, especially above your head to soak hanging baskets, is a neck injury waiting to happen. Use an indoor watering can or a bottle and refill for each basket or container. Gadgets for lowering baskets are a worthwhile investment. It is also worth putting water butts around the garden to water certain areas during a hosepipe ban.



**Digging** is very demanding and frequently the last straw for a bad back. Do not dig for long periods. Bend from the knees and avoid straining your back. Keep the blade of the spade in front of you at all times, do not bend from your waist and twist at the same time.



**Top tip:** Hoe before weeds appear “prevention is always better than cure”. If you need to weed use a fork to loosen the soil as this makes it easier to remove without too much strain on the back.

**Sweeping** grass clippings or leaves can often aggravate or cause back problems. Try to keep your back straight, allow your legs and arms to do most of the work. Avoid sweeping large piles of rubbish or grass, which may be too heavy.

**Lifting.** Ensure you know the weight of the article before you lift it. When you do lift something, keep your back straight and vertical, bend from the knees, get a good grip and lift. Before lifting anything make sure you know where you are going to put it down.

Do not stoop.



**Tools.** Buy the right equipment for the job. Long handled spades, trowels and shears make life easier. Spades with narrow blades prevent one from digging too large a spadeful.

Kneeling mats help to protect knee joints and insulate from the cold ground. Alternate between one knee then the other and finally kneel on both knees.

Use gloves to grip awkward or slippery loads to help reduce damage to your hands.

When hoeing or raking, stand with one foot in front of the other transferring your weight from the back to the front and back again.

Make sure your lawnmower is serviced regularly and if buying a new one choose one with an electric starter motor.



Consider buying a two-wheeled wheelbarrow.

Make sure that workbenches are built to the correct height, usually 2-4" / 5-10cm below the height of your elbow so that bending is reduced.



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## Garden design/planning.

Planning your garden with thought to your ability is another consideration.



If you have an existing serious condition you might like to consider raised beds or using containers - but take care when moving these.

Flowerbeds must be accessible from a path or lawn to avoid over reaching or bending.

The same can be done for vegetable gardens, making sure that they are accessible, with good paths and possibly raised beds. You may even like to try growing your vegetables in pots, containers or even hanging baskets.

Paved areas/decking will reduce the amount of grass cutting and weeding to be done.

## General Health



Make sure you drink plenty of fluids whilst working. Dehydration frequently causes headaches and fatigue and affects muscle physiology making one more vulnerable to injury.

**If you feel pain while gardening, STOP. Do not work through the pain as gardening will not make it better.**

Better to stop and rest, possibly using an ice pack wrapped in a cloth on the area for 5-10 minutes to decrease the inflammation.

If you are concerned, then please call us at the clinic.

Ask us about simple exercises, which warm up muscles before you start gardening. We will be able to advise you as to what you should or should not try in the garden.

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**[www.SheffordOsteo.com](http://www.SheffordOsteo.com)**