



## Physiotherapists give the green “thumbs up” to safe gardening

April showers bring May flowers... and also numerous muscle strains! Did you know that one of the leading causes of spring injuries is gardening? Often poor posture while gardening is why so many people seek physiotherapy in the months of April and May. Over the coming months, as your clients return to their pre-accident housekeeping duties, these tasks may include gardening maintenance activities. Some simple suggestions from the Canadian Physiotherapy Association can help your clients prevent injuries and maintain physical mobility. These tips may also be just what you need to avoid injury this spring too!

Apply the S.M.A.R.T. approach to gardening!

### **Stretch – Before, During and After Activity**

- Stretching is important for a physically demanding activity like gardening – gardening like any other active pursuit requires an appropriate warm up and warm down. Incorporate stretches for the low back, knees, hips, shoulders, elbows and wrists.

### **Move – Today for Tomorrow**

- Moving properly and efficiently creates less strain on the body. Be aware of your posture and body mechanics to help lessen the strain on your body. Minimize twisting and lifting. Carry heavy loads with a wheeled cart or wheelbarrow. Pushing is much easier than pulling!

### **Add it Up – An Hour is Power**

- Add up the time spent working in the yard. Planning, pacing and rotating around frequently eases tension in strained muscles. Take frequent stretch breaks and change positions and tasks often. If a position or posture is causing problems – move!

### **Reduce Strain – Use Tools that Work for You!**

- Reduce strain by fitting the tool to the gardener, not the gardener to the tool. Physiotherapists recommend that gardeners choose tools that have the following features to lessen strain. Tools with:
  - larger, padded handles are more comfortable for gardeners with painful or arthritic hands;
  - with tubular steel rather than wood are lightweight and may be easier to use;
  - an extended handle will help to reduce the reach;
- Also be sure to keep your tools within reach; consider wearing a gardening apron with pockets and use a wheelbarrow to transport supplies

### **Talk to a Physiotherapist**

- Physiotherapists are the healthcare professionals dedicated to enhancing and restoring personal mobility. With their applied knowledge and unique understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists work with your clients to increase mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function.
- Physiotherapists not only treat injuries; they educate their clients on ways to prevent pain or injuries that can limit return to activities of daily life.

