



ONTARIO CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION  
ASSOCIATION CHIROPRACTIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

---

**GARDENING AND YARD WORK TIPS  
BACK GROUNDER**

Gardening and yard work are high-energy workouts. They are also good forms of resistance and endurance training. In fact, light to moderate gardening can burn between 300 and 400 calories an hour. Gardening and yard work can also challenge your muscles, strengthen your heart and lungs and improve flexibility and balance. So, think like an athlete. Before you head out to your garden or yard, use the following tips to limber up with some simple **stretches**, learn the correct **lifting techniques** and perform the **right moves** with the **right tools**.

**STRETCH OUT BEFORE GOING OUT**

Repeat each exercise five times. Do not bounce, jerk or strain. You should experience a gentle stretch of the muscle. Stop if you experience pain.

**For Your Legs**

- Thigh Stretch: With one hand on the wall or a tree bend your left knee then reach back and hold your ankle with your right hand. If you cannot reach your ankle, put an old necktie or rope loosely around your ankle and hold the end in your hand in a comfortable position, without creating muscle strain. If you are wearing pants, grab your pant leg. Pull your heel toward your buttocks and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Relax and repeat with the other leg.
- Hamstring Stretch: Stand and reach your hands towards the sky. Bend forward at the waist and with both hands reach towards your toes. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, then relax. This stretch can also be done in a seated position with your legs straight and heels resting lightly on a low stool or book.

**For Your Back**

- Side Stretches: Stand and extend your arms above your head. Knit your fingers together, palms up or by grasping an old necktie or rope if it is more comfortable. Bend from the waist to one side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Then bend to the other side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. This stretch can also be done with one arm, alternating between arms.
- Back Stretch: Sit on a chair and slowly bend your body forward from your hips, putting your head down and resting your hands on the ground. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds, then relax.

**For Your Arms and Shoulders**

- Body Hugs: Hug yourself snugly and slowly rotate at the waist as far as comfortable to one side. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds and then rotate to the other side for 15 to 20 seconds.
- Shoulder Rolls: With your arms hanging loosely at your sides, slowly and smoothly rotate your shoulders in a circular motion forward, then backward.

## GARDENING AND YARD WORK TIPS BACK GROUNDER.../2

### For Your Wrists

- **Wrist Extension:** Hold one arm straight out in front of you, with the palm flat and facing down. Bend your wrist until the fingers point down toward the ground. Use your opposite hand to hold this position. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the other hand.
- **Wrist Flexion:** Hold one arm straight out in front of you, with the palm facing out, as if you were giving a 'stop' signal, use your opposite hand to hold this position. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Repeat with the other hand.

### Overall Conditioning

- Take a short 10 to 15 minute walk around the block or march on the spot for 5 minutes. Lift your knees high and gently swing your arms for maximum benefit. This will warm-up your muscles and improve your circulation.

### TRIED AND TRUE RULES OF LIFTING

- Stand close to the load to be lifted
- Place your feet shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly forward and your head up
- Keep your back straight with your feet and body pointing in the same direction
- Squat down to the object's level and test the weight of the load
- Use the strength of your leg and arm muscles to smoothly and slowly lift the load
- Keep the load close to your body
- Turn to face the intended direction of travel, pivot with your feet, and proceed with the load
- Avoid twisting your body while carrying the load
- Bend your knees and slowly lower the load to its intended place
- Do not lift heavy objects above your waist
- Avoid heavy lifting immediately after more than 15 minutes of bending or kneeling

### Is the object at or above waist level?

- Use the buddy system, if possible
- Stand on a secure platform or sturdy ladder with a helper nearby
- Slowly lift the load, keeping it close to your body
- Pass the load to your helper, or safely rest the object at a slightly lower level, as you work your way back down to the ground

### GET IN THE GROOVE WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS & MOVES

#### The Right Moves

- **Alternate your tasks.** Take turns alternating between heavy chores such as digging and lighter, less physically demanding tasks such as planting.
- **Do the scissors when you rake.** Raking can put significant strain on your back and arms. So take extra care with this activity. Stand with one leg forward and one leg back when you rake. Switch legs and hands every few minutes. Pause every few minutes to rest and stretch.

## GARDENING AND YARD WORK TIPS.../3

- **Change hands often:** Changing hands frequently when you rake, hoe or dig prevents muscle strain on one side of the body. Stand as straight as possible with your head upright.
- **Kneel to plant and weed.** Constant bending can put strain on your back, neck and leg muscles and joints, so kneeling is recommended. Use kneepads or a kneeling mat (with handles) to minimize the amount of bending required, and to make kneeling more comfortable.
- **Change positions frequently.** Once you begin, make a point of changing position every 10 to 15 minutes. Move from kneeling to standing, from digging to planting.
- **Pace Yourself.** A minimum of three brief breaks each hour is recommended. Take a few moments to move around, stretch your muscles, have a drink or simply sit and relax. Spread the work over several days - you will still achieve the same great results and your back will thank you!

### The Right Tools

#### Lighten your load

- A garden hose is easier to manage than a watering can
- Invest in a good cart or dolly to make moving heavier loads a breeze
- Buy a lightweight wheelbarrow with two wheels for extra stability and control
- Break large loads into several smaller units

#### Choose well-designed, comfortable tools

- Ensure that tools are a comfortable weight and size for you
- Select the right tool for the job
- Look for ergonomically-designed items with padded handles and spring action mechanisms
- Use long-handled, light-weight tools to help you avoid bending and twisting as you work

**Wear supportive shoes.** Select comfortable, thick-soled, protective shoes that support your arches to reduce back pain and aching muscles.

**Protect Yourself.** Remember to take a wide-brim hat, garden gloves, and sunscreen. These items will provide that extra protection needed both for now and your future.

-30-

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Angela Haynes ext. 25

Janet Blanchard-Conn ext. 33

Ontario Chiropractic Association

Tel (905) 629-8211

Toll Free (877) 327-2273

Web site [www.chiropractic.on.ca](http://www.chiropractic.on.ca)