



Proper Gardening Biomechanics

with Stacy L. Walters, RKT

Planting flowers or a vegetable garden should be enjoyable, a time to get excited about the season. To avoid discomfort, try alternating between squatting (bending at the hip and knee), kneeling on a pad and sitting on a stool.

Remember to keep your work close to you and tighten your abdominal muscles to protect your back if you need to reach or move. It is also very important to keep your wrist in alignment and avoid “flicking” your wrist as you dig.

1 Lifting and Carrying

Many lawn and garden activities, like bagging leaves or grass clippings, require lifting heavy loads. Follow these guidelines to avoid placing stress on your back when lifting.

To ensure a wide base of support, stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Tighten your abdominal muscles then bend at your hips and knees, NOT AT THE WAIST. Use your leg muscles to lift, and hold the load close to your body.

Don't twist your spine while holding the load, move your feet. Bend at the hip and knees to lower the load.



2 Mulching and Shoveling

Mulching is strenuous work! To work more efficiently and avoid injury, follow these guidelines.

Place the mulch in a wheel barrow to avoid bending over. Stand close to your work. Your legs should be in a scissor stance; with one foot placed in front of the other. Scoop and lift the mulch with a shovel while keeping your stomach muscles tight. This activates the core abdominal muscles and allows you to lift with less strain.

Avoiding twisting your spine; instead throw the mulch with the shovel using the strength of your core, not your arms or wrists.



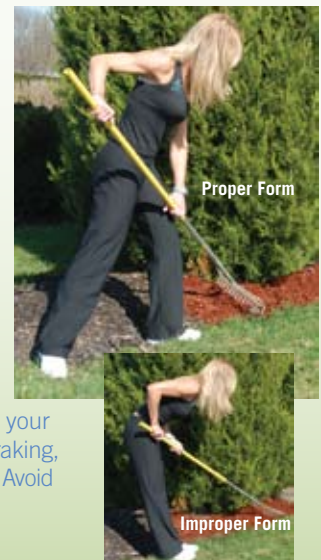
3 Raking

Raking is a physically taxing chore. Follow these guidelines to minimize your risk of sustaining an injury.

Your legs should be in a “scissor” stance with the right foot placed in front of the left for a few minutes, then reverse, placing your left foot forward and right foot back.

Vary your movement while raking. If you have been raking pulling right to left, change direction. Alternate arm and hand positions so one arm isn't doing most of the work.

Avoid twisting your body while raking. Use your legs to shift your weight rather than twisting your back. When you are finished raking, use the proper bending and lifting technique to bag the leaves. Avoid over stuffing bags and use a wheel barrow to haul the load.



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my gym is green