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Stay healthy, happy & green ...

Green is Good

Pottering around the garden was once the exclusive domain of floral clad grandmothers and 'alternative lifestyle' types - but now that sustainable living has gone mainstream, it seems we're all getting in on the outdoor action.

If you're just doing it for the fun of it, you've probably not considered that gardening can actually be good exercise. Digging, lifting, carrying and weeding can constitute an excellent 'whole-body workout', and best of all there's no gym fees!

Gardening is a great alternative to traditional exercise because it incorporates elements of accepted exercise routines while enabling you to engage in an enjoyable activity in the privacy of your own surroundings.

Research shows that gardening for 30-45 minutes most days of the week has significant health benefits, such as decreasing the risk of high blood pressure and diabetes, as well as contributing to healthier bones, muscles and joints. Elements of gardening such as digging, weeding, trimming shrubs and mowing the lawn can require the same energy requirements as other physical exercise activities such as walking, cycling, swimming and aerobics.

Not only does gardening help you physically, but it provides you with the satisfaction of a beautiful yard to look at and maybe fresh fruits and vegetables to enjoy at your dinner table. So as the gardening season approaches, consider your gardening time as an opportunity for healthier yard and a healthier you!

Watch your back when watering

Lugging litres of water to and around the garden can increase your risk of injury, particularly for older people.

Our practice wishes to advise our patients, especially our older ones how to avoid these injuries whilst watering.

We often treat patients with wrist, shoulder and back pain attributed to carrying heavy buckets and watering cans, and lifting awkward loads.

To avoid this, we recommend that you warm up before and after watering by stretching. We can recommend the types of stretches that would be most appropriate.

For our older patients who are at greater injury risk, we recommend watering early in the morning when the weather is cool and bright. This will minimise the risk of evening falls caused by reduced vision.

To help we have some handy tips for you to use when watering. For more comprehensive information on avoiding injury whilst watering or undertaking other activities see one of our physiotherapists.

Tip 1 - Bend your knees

When lifting buckets or watering cans, remember to bend your knees, not your back. Never twist your body when your back is bent. When lifting, keep your feet apart and one slightly in front of the other. If you are unsure, we can demonstrate these techniques for you.

Tip 2 - Don't overfill

Never overfill your bucket. Only carry as much weight as you know you can lift comfortably. If you are unsure, we can help suggest an appropriate weight for you. Hint: half-fill buckets to lighten the load and help avoid wrist and shoulder pain.

Tip 3 - Equalise the load

Distribute the load equally on each side of the body by using two lighter containers rather than one heavy bucket. Hint: rinse out and use 2-litre milk bottles for watering.

Tip 4 - Keep it close

Always carry buckets as close to your body as possible. Holding any weight away from your body increases the stress on your upper body and back.

Tip 5 - Use your surroundings

Place the bucket on a stool or chair when filling it, so you don't have to lift it up as far.

Contact Us:

MTM Physiotherapy Leederville

NORTH PERTH, WA, 6006

P 08 9227 6334

F 08 9228 9373

E mtmphysio@mtmphysiotherapy.com.au

www.mtmphysiotherapy.com.au

MTM Physiotherapy Leederville