

[IMAGE]

Cultivating a Healthy Garden and a Healthy You

By Editorial Staff

Gardening is a hobby many people look forward to, especially in the spring and summer months. The National Gardening Association estimates approximately 40 million U.S. households maintain a garden. Those addicted to this hobby know full well it is a total body workout that uses all of the major muscle groups: legs, glutes, abs, arms, shoulders, neck and back.

Many people don't realize the number of injuries that can occur from working in the garden. Dr. Barry Taylor, DC, an assistant professor at Northwestern Health Sciences University suggests the following guidelines for getting the most out of your gardening workout:

- Choose smaller, lighter bags of soil and make sure your knees are bent and your back is straight before lifting any bags of soil. If you're not normally physically active, it might be a good idea to have someone else till the soil for you to prevent back injuries.
- Don't stay hunched over for too long. Stand up, stretch and walk around about every 10 minutes.
- Instead of bending over for long periods of time, try using knee pads to protect your knees and your back.
- Use a lightweight, long-handled shovel or spade to reduce the strain on your back and knees.
- Remember to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

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"Gardening properly and safely will help muscles grow stronger," says Dr. Taylor. "Not only will your muscles gain strength, you will burn calories as well; up to 300 calories per hour of gardening."

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