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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Gardening Season Is Upon Us!

As with most homeowners, the summer weather signifies that it is time for yard work. This may include weeding, planting flowers, or getting the garden started. In our office, this also signifies something. It is the onset of influx of people who have worked too long and hard in their yard, resulting in a sore back. This week, we will discuss how to shovel and use a wheelbarrow properly.

Repetitive bending and twisting of the back while shoveling is a definite recipe for a problem. The lower back is generally a strong and stable part of the body. However, when used improperly, it will not perform well. When shoveling, both of your feet should be planted firmly and your pelvis should be facing wherever the shovel is digging. Digging at an angle or at the side of your body puts your back in a vulnerable twisted position. This is especially true when digging in front of you and then twisting to throw the dirt to a different spot. Doing this for a long period of time is really a bad idea. If you have to move dirt from one spot to another, dig in front of you and then turn your feet and pelvis to face the spot where the dirt is to be deposited. This prevents your back from twisting at all and keeps your back in a safe position. In addition to not twisting your back, keeping it straight is just as important. Imagine sitting up straight in a flat back chair. This is the type of position your back should be in when doing any lifting or bending. Just remember to keep a small shallow concave curve in the low back. When this curve reverses or becomes convex, your back is in a vulnerable position.

When using a wheelbarrow, the same rules apply. Keep your back straight when lifting and pushing the wheelbarrow and don't twist your back. Do not fill the wheelbarrow completely full, as it will be "tipsy". If the wheelbarrow is in the process of tipping and the person tries hard to prevent it, this is a prime situation for a back injury to occur.