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

Get Fit In TheGarden

We all search out activities that allow us to stay fit while enjoying the beautiful weather in the summertime. What if I told you there is an outdoor activity that provides strength and cardio training while increasing flexibility? As well, this activity can relieve stress and get you out in the fresh air. You get all that and you don't have to buy a piece of expensive workout equipment. Yes, you guessed it, the amazing activity is gardening.

Gardening is one of the few hobbies that people of any age can enjoy. It is the second most popular form of exercise in Canada, attracting 48% of adults. Depending on what project or activity you undertake, it can be a gentle way to stay active or a very vigorous activity. You will be amazed at how many calories you can burn in half of an hour:

Vigorous digging: 250k/cal

Lawn mowing: (not a ride on!) 195 k/cal

Weeding: 105k/cal

Raking: 100k/cal

Gardening also has many psychological benefits. Quietly tending your garden or vegetable patch is a real stress buster, helping relieve feelings of anxiety and giving you a break from the general rush of life.

Because the work is mainly physical, you have an opportunity to quietly think over any problems that are bothering you, or just spend an hour or two of luxurious day dreaming! As the results of your work will usually be quite obvious, you'll also feel a sense of accomplishment.

While gardening is good for the mind and body, like any form of physical exercise it is important to take some safety precautions. Below are some tips for healthy gardening:

Stretch - Begin with gentle arm, back, neck and leg stretches before your gardening session. You can ask your chiropractor about which stretches to do. Take each stretch to the point where you feel tension in the muscle and hold it

there for 20-30 seconds while you breathe calmly, then repeat. Remember to take stretching breaks throughout the time you spend in the garden.

Warm up - Start with easier chores like light hoeing before beginning a more strenuous activity, such as heavy digging.

Vary your activity - Use the 20-30 rule. Start slowly and gently, building up the intensity as you go. Work with about 20 to 30 repetitions of an activity, such as hoeing or raking, before resting about 20 to 30 seconds. Alternate activities frequently, approximately every 20 to 30 minutes. Using different muscles and motions is key to avoiding repetitive stress and injuries.

Lift properly - We've all heard it before but it is true, bend from your knees, keep your back straight and don't twist your body when lifting. There are times when it is necessary to bend over at the waist, strong, supportive abdominal muscles are the key to avoiding a strain in your back muscles.

See your chiropractor - It is a very good idea to see your chiropractor prior to attempting a good bout of gardening. If your joint mobility and muscle flexibility are good before attempting a day in the garden, the chance that you will injure your back is significantly less.

Drink up - It's easy to get caught up in gardening activities and forget that the body needs replenishing with fluids, especially when you're outside in the sun. Drink a glass of water before, during and after your stint in the garden.

Cover up - If you are not sure what plants are in your garden, cover up your skin rather than come into contact with plants such as poison ivy and stinging nettle. Don't forget to wear a hat if it is sunny and use a sunscreen of at least SPF 15.

Use the right equipment - Using equipment that properly fits is vital. Be sure to wear footwear that is both supportive and functional.

Now you know what gardening enthusiasts have known all along. Gardening is not only fun and good exercise, but also supplies you with some beautiful flowers or nutritious food. If you've been to too many summer barbecues or perhaps had an extra s'more around the campfire, don't worry. Pick up your hoe and shovel and get yourself warmed up, you will burn off those calories in no time!