

Ask Denise Austin

FITNESS EXPERT

A Bouquet Of Healthy Gardening Tips

(NAPSA)—Cultivating the following tips from fitness expert Denise Austin can help get you and your yard in shape.

Q: Now that spring is here, I am excited to work in my yard and garden. Any tips to prevent soreness and injury?

A: Yard work and gardening are actually great forms of exercise, just be careful. The most important thing you can do is to purchase the correct yard equipment and to use it properly. If you don't, you may end up with stiffness and soreness the next day. Here are a few tips on tools and techniques that will help prevent muscle aches along the way.

- Make sure your rake handle is 60 to 66 inches in length. Hold the rake close to your body and use short strokes—don't lean too far forward.

- You should choose a hand trowel with a curved handle, which will help you keep your wrist straight while digging. This will prevent undue strain on your wrist.

- The handle on your shovel should be 54 to 60 inches long. Keep the shovel close to your body and use your legs while lifting.

- Your garden shears should have handles that are long enough so you can trim in an upright position. Keep them close to your body.

If you do experience soreness the next day, taking a non-prescription pain reliever such as Advil will get you back out there to keep your yard looking great.

Q: I enjoy gardening, but it causes lower back pain. What am I doing wrong?

A: Luckily, most lower back pain is not serious. The majority of injuries are minor, and with prompt attention you can be on the road to recovery in no time. Remember, when doing yard work always bend at the knees, not at the waist when lifting. Also, when



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using lawn tools, keep them close to your body. And don't forget to stretch your back before beginning, and take several breaks during the day. Good luck, and happy gardening!

Q: Help! After working in the yard, I wake up aching the next day. What is the best way to stop this from happening?

A: As with any form of exercise, injury prevention is the key! First off, stretch before beginning. Gardening uses several muscle groups, and if your muscles are not stretched properly, they can become stiff and sore.

A 10-minute warm-up of exercises such as toe touches, calf and arm stretches and head tilts will help. Second, follow the tips above to be sure you are using your tools properly. And lastly, cool down when you are finished with your work. Remember to drink plenty of water throughout the day.

A few simple stretches can help prevent muscle aches and pains that may pop up the next day. If aches do occur, try a non-prescription pain reliever such as Advil to ease your discomfort.

For these and other Pain Free Tips, visit Advil's Web site at Advil.com.