



Nature's Path to Rehabilitation



**GUEST
CORNER**
LIZE LUBBE PT

Engaging with nature has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, which leads to lowered stress and anxiety. Whether you are a serious vegetable gardener or merely maintain flower planters on your deck, gardening activities can range from minimal to strenuous exercises, such as hauling bags of soil, mowing, raking, pruning, pushing a loaded wheelbarrow, or lifting stones or wood

TIPS FOR GARDENERS TO MINIMIZE INJURIES AND MAXIMIZE THE ENJOYMENT OF BEING IN TOUCH WITH NATURE AND SOIL

Gardening entails a physical workout. Before any physical exercise, including gardening, you should appropriately prepare your mind and body. Prepare your mind by planning out your day in advance, establish a postural awareness to focus on bending, lifting, and carrying correctly, and ensure you are hydrated. Prepare your body by warming up and do gentle stretches before your day of gardening starts. The physical acts of bending, stretching, and maneuvering around plants require body awareness and control which, in turn, ensures body stability. Regular gardening sessions can enhance proprioception and strengthen stabilizing muscles, which are essential to prevent falls and promote overall safety.

COMMON GARDENING INJURIES AND INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

- **Muscle strains and sprains:** Moving soil, lifting planters, and bending to plant seeds can strain the back, shoulders and leg muscles if done improperly. To minimize muscle pulls, use proper lifting techniques, stretch before gardening, and avoid overloading wheelbarrows or planters can help.
- **Tendonitis:** Repetitive motions, such as digging, raking, pruning, or weeding can cause inflammation in the tendons, commonly affecting the elbows, wrists and shoulders. To prevent repetitive motions and resulting strains, incorporate rest breaks, use ergonomically designed tools, and vary your gardening tasks.
- **Knee and hip pain:** Prolonged kneeling and squatting can lead to discomfort and pain in your knees and hips. To prevent or reduce pain, use knee pads or gardening stools, maintain proper posture, and engage in leg strengthening exercises.
- **Back injuries:** Twisting motions while lifting or improper posture during bending can place undue stress on your lower back. Use correct body mechanics by keeping your back straight while lifting and using your legs for support.
- **Balance and coordination:** Navigating uneven surfaces and handling tools

require good balance, which can diminish as we age.

ADDITIONAL TIPS TO PREVENT GARDENING-RELATED INJURIES

- Use proper tools: Ergonomically designed gardening tools can reduce strain on your body. Consider using tools with padded handles, extendable arms, and lightweight designs.
- Use a wheelbarrow or tarp to move objects, but do not overload the wheelbarrow or tarp.
- Use a garden stool or cushioned knee pads (or both) when working on the ground to reduce the stress on knees and your back.
- Use a large-handled container to carry your supplies to the garden. Carry the container with both hands, distribute the workload equally which will decrease the stress on your upper body joints.
- Practice good posture: Maintain a neutral spine when bending. When lifting, bend at the hips and knees rather than the back and keep the load close to your body.
- Change positions regularly: Alternating between sitting, standing, and kneeling can prevent excessive strain on certain body parts.
- Take breaks: Schedule regular breaks to rest and hydrate. This will help prevent fatigue and reduce the risk of injury. Pace yourself; start by gardening for 30-45 minutes twice a day instead of 2 hours continuously.
- Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water, especially on warm days, to prevent dehydration, which can contribute to muscle cramps and fatigue.
- Listen to your body: Pay attention to any signs of discomfort. If you start to feel pain, stop the activity and rest or stretch.

PHYSICAL THERAPY TIPS TO USE WHEN GARDENING

1: Follow good body mechanics when bending and kneeling, as well as getting back up from the ground.

- When bending down, hinge from the hips and push your buttocks backwards with a straight back.
 - Keep your legs spread open slightly wider than hip width.
 - Bend your knees as if sitting back in a chair and avoid bending your knees forward over your toes.
 - Keep your abdominals, core, and glutes tight.
 - Use your elbows/forearms on your thighs as you bend down to alleviate the strain on your back.
 - When getting up from the ground: spread your knees open, climb your body up from the down position, by pushing your forearms on your thighs then switch to your hands on your thighs until you to get to the upright position.
 - Exhale as you exert yourself, never hold your breath.
- 2: Warming up for a day in the garden.*
- Take a brisk walk for 15-20 minutes to warm up your muscles and joints and get the circulation flowing.



- Stand with your feet just wider than hip width, put your hands behind your neck, tighten your core with knees slightly bent, and twist your torso and upper body gently from side-to-side x 10 times.
- Bend sideways with one arm overhead and the other arm sliding down your thigh. Repeat both sides x10.
- Stretch your hamstrings and calves by placing one leg straight forward with foot flexed back against a step upriser or a tree trunk, keep your heel on the ground. Lean gently forward with your body, keep your back flat until you feel a gentle stretch behind your knee and calf. Hold

15 seconds x5.

- Practice balancing on one leg with your knee slightly bent, alternate reaching forward with your arms.

After gardening, repeat the gentle stretches. If you overdid your fun day of gardening, apply heat or ice over the muscle or joint for 15 minutes and rest. If you do not feel better, contact your physician or physical therapist.

Embrace Spring with a proactive mindset and cultivate not only your garden but also your health.

Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 190 Goldens Bridge Rd/Rt 22 in Katonah and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing contact@lizeclubbept.com or visiting www.lizeclubbept.com.

We have moved. Note our new address at 190 Goldens Bridge Road, Route 22, Suite 5 (at the lower level), Katonah, NY 10536.

It is an easily accessible location with ample parking.



We are hands on PTs!

The professional services of the team at **Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy** provides a wide range of PT rehabilitation services to patients young & old, including:

- Pre & Post Surgery Rehabilitation
- Sports Injury Rehabilitation
- Neurological Rehabilitation
- Treatment of Musculoskeletal & Orthopedic Conditions
- Postural, Balance & Gait Training
- Pain & Headache Management
- Body Rebalancing Through Diaphragm Breathing & Pelvic Stability



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