



TIPS TO TAKE THE PAIN OUT OF GARDENING

Prevention is the Key Ingredient

Tips to Reduce Muscle and Joint Ache

- 1. Know Your Limits.** Employ help or power tools to do the 'heavy' work of moving soil or building beds. Plan ahead to have extra support for the challenging chores and change tasks frequently to avoid overstress to repeated movement.
- 2. Properly warmup.** Before squatting, bending, digging...walk for at least 10 minutes to warmup up the muscles and tendons. Perform gentle stretching for the muscles you will be using the most.
- 3. Use good body mechanics.** Bend with your hips and knees and NOT your waist to reach low items. Consider sitting on a scooter wagon or use a kneeling pad to plant or weed in low beds. Use long handled tools when able. Use a rolling cart/wheelbarrow to move gardening items. Keep items close to your body as you carry them.
- 4. Take a break.** Know when to take a break. If you have been leaning forward and you begin to feel an ache in your back, slowly stand and gently lean backwards with your hands on your hips. Stretch your forearm muscles if you have been gripping an item for extended period.
- 5. Modify garden height.** If you have joint or heart conditions that make it difficult for you to accommodate to low positions or changes, raise your garden bed to containers or platforms.
- 6. Consider environment.** Avoid gardening at the hottest midday hours of the day. Stay hydrated.
- 7. Stretch when you complete.** After completing gardening tasks, stretch again just like an athlete would after an event. Stretch involved muscles



UNT | **HEALTH**
SCIENCE CENTER

SAFE TRANSITIONS FOR THE
ELDERLY PATIENT (STEP)