Gardening Tips

Accessible Gardening Tips

1. Keep the garden in scale with your preferences, motivation, and skill level. Something on the smaller side usually works best at first so you don’t get overwhelmed or discouraged.

2. If you use a wheelchair or walker, create smooth, wide pathways and beds built high enough for you to reach into easily. Design beds so that the center can be reached comfortably without stretching.

3. Get creative to make easily accessible gardens:
   - Raised beds
   - Pots
   - Hanging baskets
   - Table planters
   - Deep boxes, barrels and tubs
   - Vertical gardening with trellis and walls

4. Make a place for tool storage that is close to the garden, either a small shed, a cabinet, or even a large mailbox mounted on a fence or fencepost, or on the edge of an elevated garden bed. Adapt tool pouches into hanging pouches that can be hung from a wheelchair, walker, or the edges of raised beds.

5. Keep an eye out for tools that make tasks easier. Garden centers, gardening catalogs, and specialty catalogs are good places to look for specially-adapted hand tools.

6. Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses and mulches around plants to cut down the time required for general maintenance such as watering and weeding. Provide a convenient source of water close by the garden.

7. Most importantly, make sure you have a resting area where you can find respite from the sun and simply enjoy being in the garden.

Safety Tips:

- Garden early in the day to avoid afternoon heat and risk of dehydration.
- Stretch during and after gardening and always use good body mechanics.
- Carry a whistle. A short blast can alert others if you need help.
- Conserve energy. Sit on a stool when you spend an extended time cultivating your garden.
- Vary your tasks to avoid overstressing one part of your body.
Tool and Equipment Tips:

- Use gloves to protect hands and help maintain your grip on tools.
- Protect your knees with an inexpensive pair of knee pads.
- Tie a cord around the handles of small tools to make retrieval easier if they are dropped.
- Paint your tool handles red so you can see them more easily if they get dropped.
- Use long-handled lightweight tools and modify your tools to lessen strain on your joints.
- Use a large magnifying glass to help you see small plants and seeds.
- Wear an apron or smock with large front pockets to carry seed packets and tools.
- Use a piece of lightweight plastic pipe to help you sow seeds without bending over.

Garden Design Tips:

- To limit bending and stooping, use containers or raised beds for planting.
- When possible, use lightweight pots set on wheels to move them around more easily.
- Rig hanging planters with a pulley to lower them for watering.
- Grow vining varieties of peas and beans that can be trained up a trellis to make harvesting easier.
- Eliminate the need to lug water hoses or containers around by placing soaker hoses or drip irrigation in garden plots.
- Choose plants that appeal to senses other than sight. For instance, plants with differently textured leaves like soft like lamb’s ears or rough like heliotrope or scented plants such as herbs and fragrant flowers or plants to listen to when they rustle in a breeze.

Modified from: Horticultural Therapy - Create an Enabled Garden by Joyce Schillen

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We request that you contact our office at (915) 771-2354 at least one week in advance to advise us of the auxiliary aid or service you will require.