

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Safety Tips:
Horticulture & Gardening
Tips*

People and plants have always had a common bond. The plants provide us with food and oxygen; also they provide us with beautiful and decorative appearances. Most gardening requires use of hand tools and placing your body in a lot of awkward positions to accomplish your intended mission. If we pay attention to using the proper physical methods and tools, it will make the job less strenuous and/or stressful and more enjoyable. Following are some tips that will help you to make your gardening more enjoyable and less stressful:

ERGONOMICS-

Protect Your Back- Use erect back posture (don't hunker over) when using long-handle garden tools. Bend at your knees and hips to lift and hold objects; keep one hand under the object while carrying it.

Prevent Shoulder Discomfort- Always try to work below shoulder level when it's possible. If you have to work above shoulder level, do so in short periods of time. Alternate your arms or use both arms when possible.

Keep Elbows Partially Bent- When you're doing resistant type of work that requires elbow strength, try to avoid resting your body weight on your elbow. Try to work with your forearm in a neutral position and avoid twisting it back and forth in repetitive motions.

Work with Your Wrists in a Neutral Position- Try to avoid extreme motions of up, down, and sideways. Hold objects with a light grasp instead of a tight sustained grip. The tighter that you hold an object, the more stress it creates on your elbow.

Gloves – There are positives and negatives to wearing gloves. It is obvious that gloves will protect you from blisters and abrasions, and minimize the effects of vibrations. The negative aspects of gloves include that they reduce hand strength and are difficult to use when operating equipment. When using or wearing gloves, please consider:

- ✓ *Wearing the thinnest gloves for your required task.*
- ✓ *Gloves should cover the smallest area of hands as possible without being restrictive.*
- ✓ *Your gloves should be made from fabrics suitable for the type of work that you're engaged in.*
- ✓ *Chemical resistant gloves are not necessary for working in flowerbeds- nor would leather or cotton be suitable or necessary for spraying pesticides.*

We have different types of gloves at all the different research units. Our experienced employees are familiar with the various types and which ones to use for various applications. New and inexperienced employees might need some assistance, especially when using pesticide and other chemical applications.

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Excerpts: www.cdc.org/NASD
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TOOLS-

Choosing the right gardening tools and considering the various characteristics of their construction can make the work more comfortable. In my own shop, all my tools are heavy with wooden handles. I have had them for years. I still see some of these around our horticulture units, but they are being replaced with fiberglass ones. Consideration should be given to construction characteristics when replacement becomes necessary, such as:

- ✓ Using lighter weight tools as much as possible.
- ✓ Handles with cylindrical handle shapes and contoured to provide equal pressure along the arch of the palm.
- ✓ Handles constructed of hard, compressed rubber to minimize friction.
- ✓ Handles with different lengths can make a difference in the fatigue factor. Shorter handles offer more leverage control, but longer handles offer more power, and these are the best for jobs requiring full body motion. A good example of the latter is hoeing, and in most cases, digging landscape holes or trenching.
- ✓ Avoid using tools that require awkward body positioning.
- ✓ Clean and well-maintained tools are less likely to cause a strain injury. Personally, after every use, I clean and wipe tools down with WD-40 to extend their life and to avoid rust from water after cleaning.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT –

- Clear the area of debris before using bladed appliances like tiller, mowers or weed or brush trimmers.
- Clear the area of bystanders and pets.
- If you do accidentally hit an object or obstacle, shut the machine down and take the appropriate action to correct the incident.
- Dress properly for the work project that you're about to begin, including the proper personnel protective equipment.
- Always fill the fuel tanks when the engine is cold and, if you are using portable fuel tanks, fill them on the ground and not in your vehicle.

MISCELLANEOUS TIPS-

- When doing ground work using knee pads, cushions, or bucket seats will relieve the stress on your knees.
- Use hose reels and carts that are lightweight when possible.

The most important tool is our bodies. Proper body mechanics, well-designed tools, and periodic rest breaks will guarantee us a healthy continued work environment.

LIFT WITH YOUR KNEES

Bend at the Knees

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**WISHING WON'T KEEP YOU SAFE
~BUT SAFETY WILL!!**