

Gardening with a physical limitation

Ohio AgrAbility's mission is to promote success in agriculture for Ohio's farmers and farm families who are coping with disability or a long-term health condition

For more information: Agrability.osu.edu/resources

or contact Laura Akgerman, Disability Services Coordinator,
Ohio AgrAbility and OSU Extension, 614-292-0622, Akgerman.4@osu.edu

Set priorities before you start working

- What do you have to do in the garden today?
- What can you do later (or not at all?)
- Do you need to make changes now, or next year, to make working in the garden safer?
- Gardening should be enjoyable and relaxing, not painful & exhausting
- Take care of yourself!
- Medication interactions/sensitivity
- Increased sensitivity to heat, sun, cold, dehydration, fatigue, decreased pain recognition/neuropathy
- Drink plenty of water
- Do you need to change the way you work?
- Take a break when you get tired
- Repetitive tasks can lead to injury - change tasks frequently
- Poor posture can lead to pain, fatigue, and strains
- Avoid resting your weight on one leg or one arm while you work
- Respect pain
- Gardening is exercise – STRETCH often

Safety Tips: Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

- Use two - three points of contact when dismounting equipment
- Install handrails to assist with getting on and off equipment safely
- Do not carry objects when mounting or dismounting

Protect your hearing

- Wear headphones or ear protection when working with loud machinery

Training program focused on developing education and skills:

- Prevention of Injury
- Exercise as Medicine
- Stretching
- *Fitness for Farm Life Train-the-trainer program will be available summer 2020*
 - Program and materials developed by Leah Schwinn, OTD, and Andrew Kramer, MPH

Safe lifting

- Feet shoulder width apart
- Bend with your knees, lift with your legs
- Keep head up, look ahead, not down
- Engage stomach muscles, breathe out
- Lift and hold it close to your body
- Nose and toes should be in line
- Set it down in front of you, don't twist and toss

Equipment and Supply Storage

- Store supplies & equipment in or near the garden
- Use adjustable height shelves to store items – *have a shelf at same height as garden cart*
- Keep frequently used items between knee and shoulder height
- Limit overhead storage to lightweight and seldom used items

Hauling your Equipment and Supplies

- Use carts and wheelbarrows to haul heavy tools, supplies and plants

Tips for choosing the right cart or wheelbarrow

- Two or more wheels
- Consider weight of cart & cargo
- Look for carts or wheelbarrows with removable back or front panels
- Large tires

Protect Your Fingers, Hands and Wrists

Reduce stress on hands and wrists

- Switch from pruning to less hand-intensive work frequently, or alternate which hand you use
- Keep wrist and hands in neutral position instead of twisting
- Use grippy gloves to hold tools without exerting your hands and wrists

Long Handle Tools - Ergonomic Advantages

- Light weight
- Enlarged, foam, or soft handle
- Telescoping handle
 - Shorter length to accommodate task at hand
- Add on grips and rubber grips can be used

Protect Your Elbows & Shoulders

Protect elbows and shoulders from damage caused by excessive twisting and reaching

- Minimize working with your hands above your shoulders
- Try to limit lifting, reaching, and pulling
- Long handled tools minimize the need to reach or stoop
- **STRETCH!**

Adapted or Modified Tools

- Have long, large and/or foam-padded handles which are easier to manipulate

DIY options:

- Wrap pipe insulation around handles to make them thicker and softer
- Use PVC pipe to extend and/or contour tool handles
- Secure your DIY upgrades with duct tape

Protect Your Back, Knees and Feet

- Avoid working in awkward positions or standing for long periods of time
 - Wear comfortable and supportive shoes with a good tread
 - Remember safe lifting techniques
- Make more trips with smaller loads
- Minimize carrying heavy or awkward objects
- Use carts, wagons, or other devices

Universal Design is the creation of products and environments meant to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without need for adaptation or specialization

Examples and Ideas of Universal Design for Visual Impairment

- Clearly defined pathways and garden rows
- Motion sensor lights and well-lit work areas
- Bright colored (or glow in the dark) paint or tape on tool handles
- Smooth pathways between garden rows, limit changes in elevation
- Bank up the garden beds
- No thresholds or barriers
- “Landmarks” – scent, sound, and touch

Memory or cognitive issue

- Continue gardening
- Label everything (tools, chemicals, equipment, plants)
- Can help with stress, anxiety, motor skills
- Build connections between people

Container Gardening

- Wood pallet gardens
- Shoe organizer garden
- Window Boxes
- Planting bags
- Containers/pot

Raised Beds

- Raised beds should be 2^{1/2}' to 3' high, with leg room, and a depth of 2' – 3'
 - **You should be able to reach the back (or middle) of the bed while seated or standing**
 - Raised ground beds
 - Terraced gardens and retaining walls

Please refer to the handouts: Gardening tools handouts for specific information about equipment and tools, and Don't let the dirt hurt for stretches: Agrability.osu.edu/resources

For gardening advice and information:

Ohio State University Extension Master Gardeners <https://mastergardener.osu.edu/home>

The Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) program provides intensive training in horticulture to interested Ohio residents who then volunteer their time assisting with educational programs and activities for Ohio residents through their local OSU Extension county office. Volunteers are not required to have gardening skills or knowledge; a passion for learning about gardening and sharing this knowledge with others is a must!

Working with county Extension personnel, Master Gardener Volunteers provide educational services to their communities such as: answering gardening questions from the public; conducting plant clinics; gardening activities with children, senior citizens, or disabled persons; beautifying the community; developing community or demonstration gardens; and other horticultural activities.

Fact sheets on gardening, Ohio AgrAbility, and many more topics are available at <https://ohioline.osu.edu/home>

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