

Get Ready To Garden !

We made it through a tough winter and the snow is finally melted. With planting season quickly approaching I would like to offer some suggestions to avoid back and knee pain.

Gardening can be fun, relaxing and a great opportunity for the family to create something beautiful together. I have seen children on their bikes, inline skating and playing road hockey, it is wonderful after a long winter and many hours spent in front of the television, video games and computers to see them outside.

Get the kids involved, in the yard. They can help rake, lay earth, plant flowers, vegetables or whatever you choose to have in your garden. Let them plant their own tree, tomato plant etc... and let them take care of it throughout the season. With the rise in child obesity we need, as parents, to be active with our kids and teach them how do help us around the house and have fun doing so.

So where do you start? Planting weekend is usually around the 24th of May which gives you two weeks to get yourselves ready. Get the family together for a few minutes 3 times a week and start with some light stretching. Remember to hold each stretch for minimum 15 seconds. In October 2007 I wrote an article on Stretching to New Limits go to this link to review the stretches in the Suburban archives:

<http://www.thesuburban.com/content.jsp?sid=20290996421804419022576572375&ctid=1000349&cnid=1013042>

After you finish stretching perform a couple of sets of squats, do 12 - 15 repetitions. You can do this with or without weights. Start in an upright position feet shoulder width apart, chest elevated. Bend your knees as if you were sitting on a chair. Think of bringing your buttocks toward your heels, remembering to keep your navel pulled into your spine to ensure lower back support. Keep your head up, eyes toward the ceiling. A strong core is important to prevent back strain, that is why I stress contracting the abdominals when performing exercises. There are many more exercises to help strengthen and improve core stability, squats are terrific for strengthening the core and legs.

When you are working in the garden it can be easy to lose track of time. After 30 minutes on your knees planting or in a crouching position it can be difficult to stand up. To prevent this from happening, be sure to stand up every 10 minutes to avoid pain in your knees and stiffening in the lower back. Contract your abdominal muscles and bend your knees when lifting or putting down heavy items. You can have the kids help you by forming an "assembly" line of sorts passing the heavy items down the line so no one person is doing all the heavy work!

Doing outdoor chores with the whole family creates a feeling of pride in the home for children and parents and a wonderful bonding experience!

Happy planting and remember to stay hydrated and wear sunscreen.

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