

Back Care for gardeners

Shovelling

- Position the shovel's blade so that it is level (parallel to your hip bones) in the front.
- Position your feet one in front of the other. Now place your front foot on the shovel blade whilst anchoring your back leg into the ground.
- Lean your weight forward onto the shovel and let the weight of your body sink the shovel into the ground. Keep your spine in a long line.
- To lift the dirt/snow up, shift your weight to your back leg using a gliding motion of your pelvis.
- Don't bend your back make sure that you bend at the knees and hips.
- Leverage the shovel out of the ground by bending the knees to lower your body down more. By doing this you are using your strong pelvic and leg muscles rather than the back.
- Move your whole body to where you want the dirt to go, so rather than twisting your back, and then just turn the shovel handle to let the dirt fall there.

PROPER TECHNIQUE FOR SHOVELLING SNOW



Keep feet wide apart. Put weight on front foot close to shovel and use leg to push shovel straight ahead.

TRISH McALASTER / THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Shift weight to rear foot and keep shovel-load close to body. Lift with arms and legs, not back.

Turn feet in the direction of throw and pivot entire body rather than twisting at the waist.

Weeding

Sitting on a bucket!



- Make sure you are sat firmly on your sitting bones with your feet on the ground.
- Spread your legs apart, and position your arm into your leg to help secure your sitting posture.
- You can support yourself in this posture, using your elbow on the inside of your knee to brace, as you begin to reach for the weeds.

On all fours



- Keep your whole spine long and free of tension
- When you reach forwards to grab the weeds, push your body forward from your pelvis – allowing your shoulders to relax
- Instead of yanking the weed out – hold onto the plant and pull your whole body back
- Steer any turning, leaning or twisting movements of your spine from your pelvis.

Standing and weeding



- Prop your elbow against your leg to brace your body posture
- Place your feet wide apart and keep your spine long so you move from your hips and not your back.
- When you have to reach for a weed try to stretch out from the hips
- Try to reach from your shoulder blade all the way out of your arm and hand.

Wheelbarrow work

- Position yourself so that you are lifting from underneath using an underhanded grip.
- Bend from the knees and hips and not from the back. Once you are straight keep a long spine and lean your body weight in toward the wheelbarrow to tilt it and empty out the contents.
- When you bend from the hips, you are using very strong muscles instead of weaker back muscles which are vulnerable to strain and injury.
- To empty the wheelbarrow, straighten all the way. Lean your weight forward onto your front leg keeping a long line throughout your spine.



- **DO NOT** overload the wheelbarrow. This makes pushing harder, can cause you to strain your hips, and to lose your balance.

- ❖ Try a short warm up before you begin gardening. See our back exercise information sheet.
- ❖ Try to alternate your activities in the garden and limit them to short sessions if required
- ❖ Take regular breaks!

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