

Garden work a pain? Special tools help

There's hardly a gardener who doesn't find gardening a strain at one time or another. Stooping and bending can seem as much a part of the hobby as pruning or preparing the soil. For those with lower back problems or arthritis, this favorite pastime can quickly become a chore.

But a group of garden tools can make things easier, more efficient and reduce muscle strain.

Sold by Sentry Ways & Means Capability Center, the tools are tested for durability, utility and craftsmanship, and each must extend the capability of its user, Sentry spokesman said. The garden scoot, for example, enables the gardener to scoot along a flower bed, reducing much of the leg and back strain of traditional gardening. Resembling a tricycle, the garden scoot is available in both two- and three-wheel models. Other products include:

- The grabber rake — Combination rake and scooper eliminates the back strain normally associated with raking and picking up debris during garden maintenance. Made of stainless steel, the rake is lightweight and rust-resistant. Its grabber jaws are composed of flexible co-polymer aimed at reducing rake accidents.

- The grabber hoe — Picks up weeding debris, minimizing stooping and bending. A slide action lever on the handle closes the jaws on thorny clippings or weeds. It's made of stainless steel.

- Fruit and flower picker — A long-handled tool to reduce the bending and stretching required for cutting hard-to-reach fruit or flowers. Finger-grip controls trigger the cutting action while locking jaws hold the fruit or flower in place until it is released.

- Kneeling board with padded seat — Made in England, this tool features side rails to provide extra support as you get up and down, reducing back and knee strain. It can also be flipped over to be used as a resting bench.

- Trash bag opener — Keeps a trash or leaf bag open so your hands are free to work faster.

The Ways & Means Capability center is located on Maple Road at Bates in downtown Birmingham. Way & Means products are also available at many Sentry Drug locations. All of their products are available by mail order from the Ways & Means catalogue. To order, contact Barbara Barense, manager, at 258-6444.

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