

# Garden properly to avoid planting seeds of pain

As the spring air and sunshine lure you to your yard and garden, don't let your enthusiasm for the new season plant the seed for aches and pains, warns Dr. Paul Silcox, director of the Silcox Chiropractic Center in Livonia.

Improper gardening practices normally bring on more cases of back pain than running or even outdoor sports.

The best preparation for spring gardening is a back properly conditioned by exercises and good posture all year round, advises Silcox. Moreover, when you garden let your legs and arms do the work instead of your back.

This accomplishes three things — to

help reduce your chances of causing back pain and injury, to strengthen your arms and legs, and to make your gardening easier.

**SILCOX RECOMMENDS** these 10 tips to help you with your gardening pleasure.

1. Warm up with a brisk walk or light running to loosen your muscles and increase your musculoskeletal system's flexibility.

2. Know your strengths and limitations. Do not overexert.

3. When weeding, get down on your hands and knees rather than bending

and twisting from the waist. Don't stand and bend over repeatedly.

4. Keep your back straight when you stand up from a sitting or crouched position.

5. Lift dirt and debris by letting your arms, legs and thighs carry the load. Keep your back straight and bend your knees. Handle only manageable loads at a time.

6. Use long-handled tools to keep from stooping while raking, digging or moving. Don't stoop when pushing a wheelbarrow.

7. Switch hands frequently when doing prolonged raking, hoeing or dig-

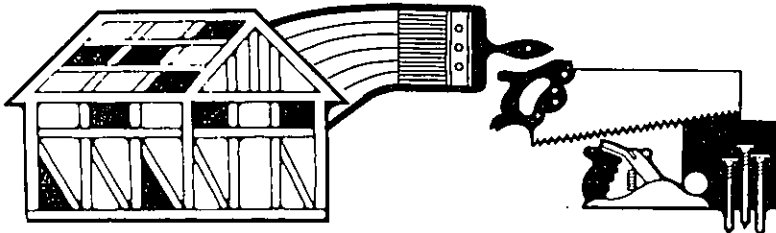
ging. Repetitive motion on one side can bring on low-back and shoulder spasms.

8. Don't work too long in one position, especially one that is awkward or unusual. This can cause muscle imbalance.

9. Carry objects close to your body, so as not to risk straining your neck and lower back.

10. Don't overexpose yourself to long periods in the sun without protection of the head and body. Take frequent breaks.

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