



# Right tools can ease gardening aches

AP — Is there such a thing as painless gardening?

Judy Glatstein, an instructor in design at the New York Botanical Garden and herself a gardener in Wilton, Conn., says perhaps not — but there are many things one can do to minimize the aches.

Use tools appropriate to the job, she urges. If you're planting just a few bulbs, a trowel will do; for large quantities, dig up the area involved with a

## Don't forget

Cynoglossum, also known as Chinese forget-me-not, is an annual that will reproduce itself in any corner of the yard or garden if the seeds are not removed. If you don't want to weed it out in the spring, cut back the bloom stalks before the seeds ripen.

Impatiens (also called sultanta) is not winter hardy, but you can pot it and take it indoors before frost. It makes a nice house plant but requires a sunny place for indoors blooming.

shovel or spade. Don't use a heavy pump sprayer if you have only a few bushes or plants to spray. A small container with a hand trigger will do.

Reading seed catalogs in winter is fun, but it won't keep you in shape for gardening in the spring. Mrs. Glatstein, Fred McGourty, a Norwalk, Conn., nurseryman who teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, and others urge exercise — walking, swimming, other sports during the winter. And in the spring, start gardening slowly; don't try to put in a full day right off.

LIFTING IS LESS likely to give gardeners aching backs if they bend the knees, grasp the item to be lifted, and then straighten up.

Mrs. Glatstein also says heavy things should be carried — if they must be carried — close to the body. But she adds, "Man invented the wheel for a reason," so get a wheelbarrow or garden cart for heavy moving. The bigger the wheels, the more maneuverable the cart.

Knees ache from damp earth? Pads for kneeling can be purchased at garden centers or elsewhere — or made at home, using scrap foam rubber. Or try raised beds, or a hanging garden, in pots.

Joel Flagler, a Rutgers University agricultural-resources management agent in New Jersey, says garden centers and garden supply catalogs offer all kinds of adaptive tools that make it possible for elderly or handicapped people to garden, and for anyone to garden more comfortably. Wood or aluminum handles can extend the length of standard shovels, hoes or cultivators. Low folding chairs and stools enable one to sit while weeding or hoeing.

Attitude toward gardening may also contribute to pain or painlessness, some gardeners say.

To keep up your morale, take on chores you can complete, urges Mrs. Glatstein. Then go on to something else. She says beginning gardeners should keep their gardens small and choose plants that are easy to maintain.

Elvin MacDonald, director of special projects at Brooklyn Botanic Garden in New York, also urges gardeners to relax. "If you think weeding hard dirt a curse, then you're more likely to get blisters," he says.

TOOLS SHOULD FEEL comfortable to the user and should be used properly. Short or tall, strong or not so strong, the gardener buying a tool should look around until finding one that feels right.

The Cooperative Extension service at Cornell University in New York State offers these tips:

- Don't leave a rake on the ground with the tines pointed upward. If you step on it, the handle may hit you in the face (and the tines could hurt your foot).

- Wear gloves when picking up garden debris, in case there are thorns or other sharp items.

- Wear protective goggles when using power equipment, and a mask over mouth and nose when spraying with insecticides.

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