

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



April 29, 2013



Safety Tips: Horticulture  
and Gardening Tips



People and plants have always had a common bond. The plants provide us food and oxygen, and also provide us with beautiful and decorative appearances. Most all of gardening labor requires hand tools and causes taxing positions on your muscles and body parts. Sometimes the hurt overshadows the satisfaction we get from working in the garden. Attention to the proper physical methods to do garden work, both commercial and at home, can sometimes reduce the onset of physical problems. The right tools for the job will result in a less strenuous job and will prove to be more enjoyable.

Following are some tips that will help to make your spring more enjoyable and less stressful as we prepare our beds and test-plots:

## ERGONOMICS-

**Protect your Back** – Use erect back posture (don't hunch over) when using long-handled garden tools. Bend at your knees and hips to lift and hold objects; keep one hand under the object while carrying it.

**Prevent Shoulder Discomfort** – Always try to work below shoulder level, when it is possible. If you have to work above shoulder level, do so in short periods of time. Alternate your arms or use both arms when possible.

**Keep Elbows Partially Bent** – When you're doing resistant type work that requires elbow strength, try to avoid resting your body weight on your elbows. Try to work with your forearm in a neutral position and avoid twisting it back and forth on a repetitive basis.

**Work with Your Wrist in a Neutral Position** – Try to avoid extreme motions of up, down and sideways. Hold objects with a light grasp instead of a tight sustained grip. The tighter that you hold an object, the more stress it creates on the elbow.

## GLOVES-

There are positives and negatives to wearing gloves. It is obvious that gloves protect you from blisters, abrasions, and minimizes the effects of vibrations. The negative aspect of gloves is the fact that it does reduce hand strength and is difficult to use when operating equipment. When using or wearing gloves, please consider:

- ✓ **Wearing the thinnest gloves as possible for their protection will also offer the needed protection for your required task.**
- ✓ **Gloves should cover the smallest area of hands as possible without being restrictive.**
- ✓ **Your gloves should be made from fabrics suitable to the work that you are doing.**
- ✓ **Chemical resistant gloves are not necessary for working up flowerbeds - nor would leather or cotton be suitable or necessary for spraying pesticides.**

**We have different types of gloves at all of our units and I'm sure that the experienced employees will know the difference and know the correct ones to use. New and inexperienced employees might need assistance to avoid this problem.**

## TOOLS-

Choosing the right gardening tools and considering the various characteristics of their construction can make the work more comfortable. In my own shop, all my tools are heavy with wooden handles. I have had these for years. I know that we have some of these types at our horticulture units. Consideration should be given to construction characteristics when replacement becomes necessary, such as:

- ✓ **Using lighter weight tools as much as possible.**
- ✓ **Handles with cylindrical shapes and contoured to provide equal pressure along the arch of the palm.**
- ✓ **Handles constructed of hard, compressed rubber to minimize friction.**
- ✓ **Handles with lengths can make a difference on the job. Shorter handles offer more leverage control, but longer handles offer more power, and these are the best for jobs requiring full body motion. A good example of the latter is hoeing, and in most cases, hoeing and digging landscape holes or trenching.**
- ✓ **Avoid using tools that require awkward body positioning.**
- ✓ **Clean and well-maintained tools are less likely to cause a strain injury. Personally, after every use, I clean and wipe my tools down with WD-40 for extended life and to avoid rust from water after cleaning.**

## ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT-

- Clear the area of debris before using bladed appliances like tillers or mowers and clear the area of bystanders.
- If you do hit an object, obviously, shut the machine down and take the appropriate action to correct the incident.
- Dress properly for the work that you are starting.
- Always fill the gas tanks with the engine cold.
- Read the manufacturer's manual to get familiar with all the workings of your tool.

## MISCELLANEOUS TIPS-

When working on the ground, kneepads, cushions or tool bucket seats will relieve the stress on your knees. Use hose reels whenever possible and carts that are light weight when possible.

**The most important tool is our body! Proper body mechanics, well-designed tools and periodic rest breaks will guarantee us a healthy continued work environment.**

*Lift with ease –  
Bend at the knees  
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**WISHING WON'T KEEP YOU SAFE;  
BUT SAFETY WILL!!**