

All Gardens Great & Small
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



Maintaining A Healthy Back In The Garden

Laying before you on the floor a piece of paper that shows your garden plot plan and a 40 pound bag of potting soil. If you were to bend over and pick up either one of these items, which one do you think could put the most strain on your lower back? The majority would answer the 40 pound bag of potting soil. Yes, the 40 pound bag of potting soil can strain your lower back, but so can the piece of paper that shows your garden plot plan.

I personally can attest to this situation. Some time ago, I did bend over to pick up an 8x10 piece of paper, and felt this pain shoot thru my back and bring me to my knees in pain. I spent 10 long days in bed trying to heal my back.

You see, it isn't always the weight of the item you are picking up or lifting that can cause strain

to the lower back. In my case, it was the position I was in when I reached down to pick up the piece of paper. I over rotated (twisted) my back when I bent down to pick up the piece of paper, also, my back was very tight from the strain I placed on it the day before.

Gardening is an excellent form of exercise.

Don't stress your joints. Any age group from toddler to a senior citizen can become involved in gardening. It's a great way to release stress, make friends and it burns anywhere from 250-300 calories an hour.

However, too much of a good thing has its price. When I'm out in my gardens, I seem to lose track of time and before I know it, I've worked through lunch and my children are begging me to start dinner. It's so easy to spend 5-6 hours out in my gardens and not realize that I've just spent the 5-6 hours bent over. Oh my aching

back! I'll pay for it in the morning!

Here are some tips on how to keep your back strong and healthy for those long hours spent in the garden.

- When pulling weeds, picking up garden tools, etc., never bend from the waist only; bend from the hips and the knees.

- When lifting heavy items, such as bags of soil, shovels, the wheel barrow, etc., lift the bulk of the weight with the legs.

- Never lift objects higher than your waist.

- Always turn and face the gardening equipment or supplies you are lifting.

- Avoid carrying unbalanced loads. An example of this would be carrying a 25 pound bag of soil in one hand and an empty watering can in the other hand. Make two trips if you have to or load up the wheel barrow.

- Hold heavy objects close to your body. Keep hoe, rake, heavy bags of soil, etc., in close to your body.

- Never carry anything heavier than you can manage with ease.

- Avoid sudden movements.

- Learn to keep your head in line with the spine, shoulders are back and down and abdominal contracted. (Pulled in tightly).

- Incorporate strengthening exercises for the back, abdominal and thighs.

- Stretch before, during, and after any strenuous task. Any time you feel tension in the back, stretching is needed.

- Most importantly, before beginning any strenuous activity, whether it's as simple as gardening or beginning a stretching and strengthening program for your lower back, you should first consult with your physician.

Gardening has a great many rewards, but just as our gardens need TLC, we also need to take time to care for ourselves. So, begin today by implementing the tips on caring for your back. Work

it into your daily life style and dig to your hearts content!

Prepared by Donna O'Neill, a Master Gardener volunteer for Penn State Cooperative Extension in York County.

Any questions regarding the above article can be addressed to, Donna O'Neill, Penn State Master Gardener Program, 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York, PA 17402-9041 or you may call (717) 840-8408.

State Representative

(Continued from Page B-1)
signed into law during her first term in office. One of those is the Farmland Preservation bill.

She is currently working on a bill for approval of an ag license plate. The profits from the sale of the specialty license plates would help fund ag land preservation.

Most legislators, Sheila said, are sympathetic towards farming concerns and want to help them, but often don't realize that some proposals — especially those dealing with environmental concerns — could put farmers out of business instead of benefitting the agricultural community.

"It's hard enough farming without being burdened with paper work," she said.

Of her duties as representative, Sheila finds the public speaking

aspect the most challenging.

"I still get butterflies wherever I get up to speak," she said.

There is little sparetime for Sheila. In fact, she said she hasn't read a book for pleasure since she took office. And the baby quilt she started to make for Emilie before her birth has now been relegated for the distant advent of a grandchild.

When asked who does the cooking, Sheila smiles and answers, "Cooking? We have a microwave."

Sheila isn't thinking of trying for national political office. She said, "I'm happy with my job here. I want to do the best at what I'm called to do. I couldn't handle that Washington Beltway, but then again, I never planned to seek this one (political seat)."



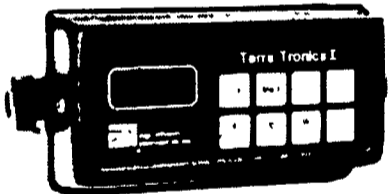
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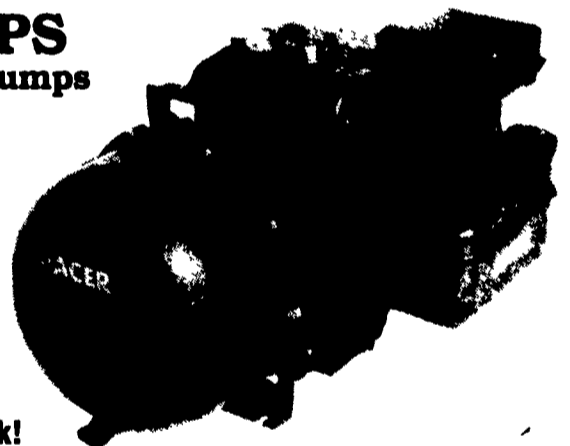
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