

Tips and Techniques for the Senior Gardener

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Gardening is America's favorite leisure outdoor activity, enjoyed by more than 78 million people, according to the National Gardening Association. For most of us, gardening provides a welcome sojourn in the natural world, a sanctuary that promises relief from the challenges of life. Yet many feel the need to give it up as they become less physically able. Gardening can enrich the life of the senior gardener in many ways - physically, mentally, and spiritually. The following tips for modifying tools and gardening techniques can make all the difference for the senior gardener.

- Paint your garden tools with a bright color. This will enable the senior gardener to easily locate tools.
- Purchase seed and seed tape for easier handling and planting.
- Grow plants that heighten the sense of touch or smell.
- Use a vertical garden or trellis. This allows the senior gardener to plant and weed without stooping or bending.
- Build and design raised beds that provide a place to sit and garden.
- Try using a stool, chair, or bench to avoid constant stooping or squatting.
- Use the right length tools. Long handled or curved handled tools provide better grips and more leverage.
- For safety sake, garden early in the morning or late in the day. Avoid being out between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Drink plenty of decaffeinated fluids to prevent dehydration. Also, allow time for breaks in the shade.
- Wear lightweight clothing, long sleeved shirt, eye protection, sunscreen, a big hat to shade face, and gardening gloves.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Service or the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1.800.995.8503.

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