



# Helpful gardening assistive products



Gardening is one of the most popular recreational activities in Australia. There are good reasons for this. It has many physical and mental health benefits. For example:

- Digging, pulling, sweeping, and raking are all forms of resistance aerobic exercise
- Getting up and down from a kneeling position requires flexibility, strength, and balance
- Pruning requires grip strength and dexterity
- Gardening is a source of pleasure and relaxation
- Being around plants, or outside in nature, makes us feel good.



# Make gardening easier

There are many tools and products to make gardening easier. Safety and protective products are also important. For example gloves (including gloves with arm sleeves or long gauntlets), safety glasses, face masks, ear defenders, boot guards, and sunscreen can all make gardening safer.

Take care of yourself by doing a little bit of gardening more often, rather than a lot all at once. Use a garden trolley or bucket to hold what you use most of the time. This means you'll always have what you need close at hand to keep up with garden maintenance.

For example:

- Pull up a weed or two on your way to the letter box
- Dead head the roses as you walk around the garden
- Do light pruning when you first notice what needs attention.

## Tips for using gardening assistive products

- Get in the habit of carrying secateurs with you when you go out into the garden.
- Keep your favourite tools stored at waist height where they are accessible.
- Use a shadow board or a canvas hanger to sort and store your hand tools and small gardening items.
- Get rid of damaged tools or tools that you don't use. Replace them with light and ergonomic tools.
- Look for easy-to-use solutions to manage difficult tasks. For example, a self-winding hose reel reduces the risk of tripping on a garden hose left on the ground.
- Manage heavy items with tools like a folding ramp, sack truck, dump cart, or motorised wheelbarrow.

# Bending, kneeling, and carrying in the garden

To reduce the impacts of bending and kneeling, consider:

- large kneeling pads or knee pads
- vertical wall gardens
- pot-plant stands
- raised garden beds.

Long-handled gardening tools reduce the need to bend or kneel. Mid-length gardening tools are useful for reaching into garden beds. If pushing a wheelbarrow or carrying is difficult, consider:

- garden carts and trolleys for garden pots
- portable ramps
- battery-operated wheelbarrows.



# Assistive products to help your hands while gardening

- Light and ergonomic hand tools are designed to prevent hand and wrist strain.
- Ratchet pruners are helpful if you have limited grip strength.
- All-purpose pick-up tools help you pick up small items in the garden. These can include pots and seedling punnets, as well as garden rubbish.
- If reaching is difficult try a watering wand, long-handled fruit picker, multi-purpose reacher/leaf grabber, and mid-to-long handled gardening tools.
- Alternative options for pruning include left-handed secateurs, ratchet pruners, Fiskars Plus pruners, and the Fiskars SoftGrip Pruner which is suitable for small hands.

## Gardening products to help you see and remember

- Use a garden trug or brightly coloured bucket to hold hand tools or get a gardening apron with large pockets so you don't forget where your gardening tools are.
- Buy tools with colourful or fluorescent handles that are easier to find for someone with low vision or memory loss.
- Use plant tags and labels help to keep track of plants in the garden. Copper plant labels can be embossed with raised lettering or Braille.
- Invest in watering systems and self-watering pots.
- Store tools on peg boards or a canvas hanger.
- Get wall charts and a plant journal to help you keep track of your gardening.

# Prepare your body for gardening

- Do [gardener's stretching](#) before and after gardening.
- Wear shoes that will support your feet and protect them.
- Stay sun safe. In warmer weather, garden early in the morning and late in the afternoon to avoid high temperatures ([ANU 2023](#)).
- Alternate your gardening jobs and limit your time on repetitive tasks. This will help reduce stress on your joints and muscles.
- Mix jobs that require bending with standing tasks to avoid stiffness.
- Keep a chair and bottle of water nearby (ideally in a shady area) so that you can stop for breaks, even if you don't think you need to.

## Adapt your garden

Gardening is all about change. If you plan to stay in your home, it's worth making the changes to make enjoying your gardening easier.

Make a list of the jobs you need to do regularly, and the jobs you do less often. With some planning you can adapt your garden in stages. If you can, pay for professional help with a garden redesign for low maintenance, accessibility, and safety.

Mature gardens can sometimes be easier to maintain. You may only need to pay for help with jobs like lawn mowing, pruning vines, and hedges. Robotic lawnmowers are good for lawns that don't have many obstacles. Some new brands can also apply fertilizer and do mulching.

# Simple ways to adapt your garden

- Keep established trees and shrubs but remove low-level plants.
- Plant low-maintenance garden beds with suitable natives, grasses, and hardy ground covers.
- Plant perennials rather than annuals and use plants with the same fertilizer and water needs.
- Mass plant one variety suited to the existing light and soil conditions. This is often what landscapers do to create visual impact in a large area.
- Maybe replace thirsty outdoor pot plants with succulents or hardier plants bred for growing in pots.
- Install automatic watering systems to take care of your garden and cut down on hand watering.

## Health benefits of indoor gardening

Houseplants have been shown to inspire creativity and foster a connection with nature. They give us relief in closed spaces by making the environment more pleasant.

Research has shown that keeping indoor pot plants has positive health benefits ([Healthline 2020](#)).

These include:

- improving indoor air quality
- reducing stress and anxiety
- lifting your mood and recharging you
- improving your recovery from an illness, injury, or surgery.

# An occupational therapist can help

## An occupational therapist (OT) can help you:

1. Adapt tasks to stay independent.
2. Give you tips to simplify your work in the garden.
3. Find products that make it easier for you to maintain your garden.
4. Protect your joints and manage any pain you might experience.

Find an OT in your local area with the search tool on the [Occupational Therapy Australia](#) website.

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