

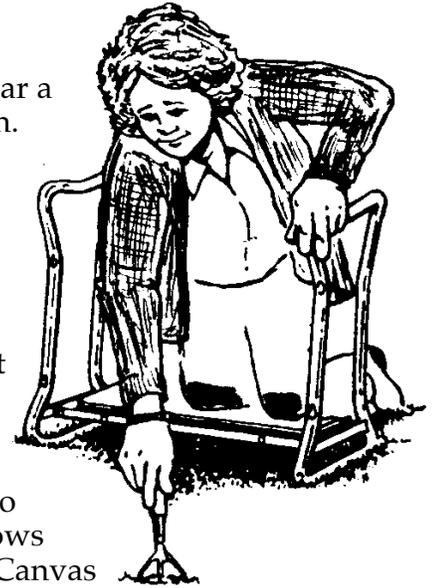
# Gardening Hints for People with Arthritis

M. Jewell and J. Powell

Arthritis is a painful joint disorder that can discourage its sufferers from gardening. The techniques mentioned in this publication can help gardening remain a source of pleasure for people suffering from arthritis.

- *Whenever possible, garden in raised beds or containers.* Raised beds minimize bending and prevent the overuse of arthritic joints. Container gardening enables you to move the garden to more convenient places for maintenance. Almost any plant can be grown in a box or pot. Everything from dwarf trees to rhubarb thrives if it is planted in the right size container. Place containers on wheeled caddies for easier moving. Place hanging baskets on a pulley system for easier watering, feeding, and grooming.
- *Select your plants carefully.* Plants can provide food, color, interest, aroma, or they can simply be good friends who listen and don't talk back! When you select a plant, consider the plant's height, its expected life span, and the amount of attention it needs, including watering and spraying. Consider what you want or need—vegetables, flowers, or herbs.
- *Make work areas accessible.* If possible, make walkways 3 feet wide with a non-slippery surface. Provide handrails or handgrips where possible.
- *Use inexpensive foam rubber pads when you kneel.* This helps protect your

knees. Use lightweight tools. Wear a carpenter's apron. Its deep pockets are perfect for carrying tools, seeds, etc. Buy gloves that are one or two sizes too large and put foam padding in them. This eases joint pain. Foam padding added to tool handles allows better gripping. Canvas or cotton gloves help your joints feel less bruised.



- *"Click seeders" are very practical.* With them, you don't have to grasp seeds in your hand, and they help you space the seeds when planting in rows. Seed tapes help too.
- *Many specially adapted tools are on the market.* For example, there are kneeling benches with handles on both sides, tools with enlarged handles that allow decreased gripping, and lightweight equipment that is easier to carry and use.

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## MAKING GARDENING EASIER

- *For watering the garden, find a sprinkler that covers the area.* Leave the sprinkler in place. When you want to water, just turn on the faucet—no hoses to pull and roll and no heavy water cans to carry!
- *Plant more perennials.* You won't have to reseed each year, yet you have bloom, vegetation or fruit every year. Many are adapted to almost any sun or shade situation. Examples of flowering plants are bleeding heart, hosta, peony, delphinium, and phlox. You can also try perennial vegetables and fruits like asparagus, herbs, horseradish, rhubarb and strawberries, or woody perennials such as blueberries and currants.
- *Wear a whistle around your neck.* Especially if you are alone in the garden. You can use it to call help if you need it.
- *Pace yourself and don't overdo.* Take a rest now and then. Your garden will wait. Don't let rain and arthritis dampen your gardening zeal!

### For more information

If you'd like more information, contact the Oregon Master Gardener Program, Oregon State University Extension Service, 211 S.E. 80th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97215

### Other Publications

Other titles available in the "Making Gardening Easier" set are:

- Foster, S., Duvall, C., and Powell, J., *Adaptive Gardening Techniques for the Visually Impaired*. Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8498, (Corvallis, 1992).
- Throckmorton, E., and Powell, J., *Gardening Adaptations for People with Gripping and Lifting Problems*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8500 (Corvallis, 1992).
- Foster, S., and Powell, J., *Gardening Strategies for People with Heart and Lung Problems*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8501 (Corvallis, 1992).
- Foster, S., and Powell, J., *Gardening Ideas for Children with Special Needs*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8502 (Corvallis, 1992).
- McNeilan, R.A., and Powell, J., *Therapeutic Benefits of Gardening*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8503 (Corvallis, 1992).
- Throckmorton, E., and Powell, J., *Adapting Garden Tools to Overcome Physical Challenges*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8504 (Corvallis, 1992).
- Rogers, P., and Powell, J., *Gardening with Limited Range of Motion*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8505 (Corvallis, 1992).

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