

## Digging Deep

# Gardening is Good for Your Mind, Body and Spirit

By Cynthia Brian

*Kings and cabbages go back to compost, but good deeds stay green forever, ~ Rick De Marinis*



*Is there anything more bucolic than a waterfall cascading into a pond?*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

**G**ardening is good for you. It rekindles our passions, arouses our senses and keeps us in shape. Gardening is a terrific activity for maintaining joint flexibility, bone density, range of motion and, most of all, quality of life.

We have to garden wisely, however, if we don't want to be complaining about aches, pains, bug bites, cuts and injuries, of which I've had more than enough to last my lifetime. Do a good deed for yourself and heed some handy, healthy tips to safer, happy gardening experience.

If you are already a gardener, you know the joys and benefits. For those who are about to begin, get ready for a strenuous workout with the music, smells and tastes of nature.



*Choke Weed, although green, is an invasive nuisance.*

### Getting Going

1. If you have any injuries or illnesses, like all activities, consult your physician before beginning.
  2. Choose a time of day where you can dedicate an hour or so to the task.
  3. Wear a hat, sunblock, gloves and comfortable clothing.
  4. Warm up your body with a few stretches or a brisk walk before beginning.
  5. Despite your enthusiasm, pace your work and avoid being in the same position for extended periods. For example, if you are weeding, switch to pruning after 45 minutes.
  6. Use a hand truck to move large, heavy sacks and potted plants.
  7. Keep your feet on the ground when cutting limbs or harvesting fruit. Use a ladder only when you have a spotter.
  8. Use the best tools that are strong, yet lightweight.
  9. Give your back a break. Too much twisting and bending can cause strain. Consider raised beds as an alternative if you experience back pain.
  10. Buy a wheelbarrow. It makes moving easier and saves so much time.
  11. If you like to kneel while planting or weeding, use a Styrofoam pad to protect your knees. Alternate sitting and kneeling. You can also purchase a rolling garden stool.
  12. Shake it up, varying your chores to work your different muscles. Carrying, lifting, mowing, blowing, pruning, raking, sweeping, deadheading, digging, weeding, arranging, even smelling the roses all activate different muscles and senses.
  13. Take frequent breaks to avoid stiffness or tightness.
  14. Drink plenty of water to rehydrate.
- Get fit. Get gardening. Get doing good deeds for you.

... continued on page D15

