

# Ways to warm up before gardening



There are many benefits of [gardening for healthy ageing](#).

It's an emotionally rewarding hobby, after all.

It also happens to be an accessible and low-impact form of physical activity. And one of the most important things you can do for your health as you age is [exercise](#) regularly.

But like with any physical activity, it's best to warm up your muscles before you get to work.

## Exercise and gardening for your health

Working in the garden is a great example of incidental exercise. This means you can include it in your daily activities without thinking too much about it.

Regular exercise can [reduce your risk of falls](#) and help you improve your balance and mobility. [The Department of Health and Aged Care](#) recommends 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise daily. [You can learn more about exercise recommendations for older people here.](#)

Staying active as an older adult means you can maintain your independence. It helps you manage, delay, or even prevent some of the health problems that come with age. This includes [type 2 diabetes](#), [osteoporosis](#), [osteoarthritis](#), [high blood pressure](#) and heart disease.

Gardening promotes cardiovascular health, muscle strength and joint flexibility. It works all your major muscle groups. That includes your legs, back, abdomen, arms, shoulders, and neck.

Gardening also stimulates cognitive function. So, it helps keep your mind sharp. And it can help people with [dementia](#).

Spending time outdoors under the sun can improve your [Vitamin D](#) levels. This is essential for your bone health and immunity. Replacing stress with positive emotions has [benefits for your immune system](#), too.

And gardening does [relieve stress](#). It requires focus and consideration, making it a form of incidental mindfulness. It reduces your levels of cortisol (the stress hormone).

## Warming up before exercising in the garden

### Stretching Exercises

Before commencing gardening, it's important to get your muscles warmed up.

This is because gardening can be strenuous for your lower back, as well as other parts of your body.

Stretching beforehand can help prevent injuries and minimise muscle imbalances. And it can improve your ability to work in the garden for longer periods of time.

Here are some gentle stretches you can try before you garden.

#### Important information

Stop and seek advice from a healthcare professional if you feel any new or increasing pain. Or if you feel dizzy, clammy, or short of breath. Some of these exercises may not be for you. Consult a healthcare professional if you are unsure.

And consider keeping a friend nearby when trying these exercises.

The Health Department recommends you do half an hour of exercise on most days. But any amount of exercise is better than none.

Repeat each exercise a set number of times, or for a set duration. You could start with 10 repetitions, or 30-second bursts. Increase your sets as you develop more strength and endurance.



## Marching on the spot

- Face forward and stand straight. Have your elbows bent at 90-degree angles, to bring your hands up in front of you. Keep your feet hip-width apart.
- Start marching on the spot by alternating knee lifts. March with your arms at the same time.
- Keep your chest open and your back straight. Make sure your breathing stays steady and slow.



## Shoulder rolls

- Stand straight, arms by your side and feet shoulder-width apart.
- Relax your body.
- Slowly rotate both your shoulders forward, in big circular motions.
- Repeat the movement backward.



## Side twists

- Stand straight, with your feet hip-width apart. Start twisting to your left, while also looking to your left. Keep your arms next to you and move them with your body.
- After returning to centre, do the same for your right side.



## Hand stretches

- Put your arms out straight in front of you.
- Clench your fingers into a fist, then relax them, keeping your arms straight.



## Wrist and forearm stretches

- Point your arms straight out in front of your face, holding them up at shoulder level.
- Point your wrist down and hold for 5 seconds, pushing with your other arm.
- Point up and hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat with the other arm.

## Helpful tips

- Your doctor or allied health professional can give you exercise advice that is specific to you and your condition.
- There are many [assistive products for gardening](#) that might help you avoid pain.
- If you are in the sun, be sure to [stay hydrated](#).
- A [healthy diet](#) can help make exercise easier and more beneficial.

## More helpful information

If you would like to find local exercise classes, social activities, and helpful tips, try the [LiveUp quiz](#).

You can also chat with our friendly team for advice on freephone 1800 951 971.

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## CONTACT US

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