

# LifeTimes



A quarterly publication to enhance the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities

## Gardening without pain: Tips for using and modifying tools

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Keeping your garden looking its best often requires long hours “in the trenches” and can lead to aches and pains the following day. Gardeners can reduce their work and minimize these aches and pains by choosing the correct tool for the job at hand. This article examines different types of gardening tools and offers tips on how to best use them.

Regardless of the garden tool you choose, it’s important to hold that tool properly. A person’s grip strength is affected by the position of the wrist. You will achieve maximum grip strength when your wrist is in a relaxed or “neutral” position. This position is achieved when your hand is held at the same angle as your forearm. Any deviation from this position can result in losing up to 25 percent of your gripping strength.

The *ulnar deviation* (bent) wrist posture is the worst. When your wrist is bent, the tendons in your hand that flex your fingers are easily irritated by the extra exertion made when your wrist is in this position. The result: sore muscles and joints in your hands. So keep your wrist as straight as possible when using hand tools in the garden. Wraps and wrist braces are available to help gardeners keep their wrists in the proper position.



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Now let’s take a look at some garden tools. *Ergonomics* is a buzz word that is getting a lot of attention in office furniture and kitchen utensils. Now we are seeing more ergonomic gardening tools available. An ergonomic garden tool has certain features designed to keep the user’s body in neutral positions. This will cause less physical stress and allow the gardener to work longer. Not all ergonomic tools are equal. When choosing a garden tool, you should examine it for certain features.

- **Grip.** The handle of a tool should have a textured, non-slip surface to add resistance and minimize the gripping strength needed to hold the tool. It should also be pliable to allow for a more comfortable grip. A good ergonomic tool will have an enlarged grip that requires less squeezing to hold the tool. The harder you have to squeeze a tool, the quicker your hands will tire.

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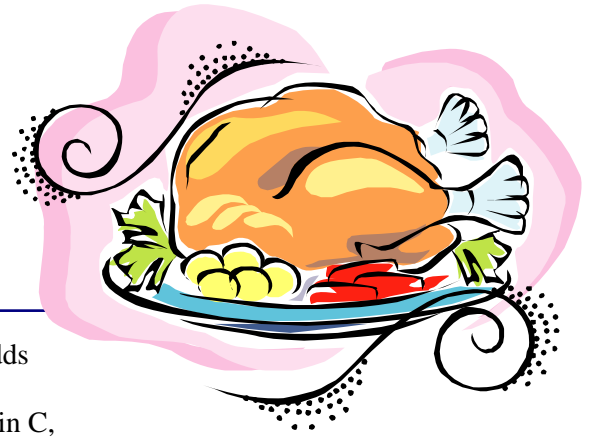
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# Party 'Tid-bites': Making healthy choices

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Food is one of many pleasures of parties, holiday festivities, and other social gatherings at every time of the year. For many, the holiday season brings visions of candy, cookies and chocolate, but some traditional holiday foods can leave you guilt-free.

Healthy eating is all about making wise choices. Holiday eating is no exception. We often put our focus on what not to eat, but there are still many nutritional goodies in our traditional dinner that we should not overlook. Luckily the holidays feature many healthy foods. It is a matter of how they are prepared and consumed.

## Where do you begin?

- **Pumpkin:** Let's not forget the pumpkin and its famous pie. Pumpkin pie tastes great this time of year and is an excellent source of nutrients. It is rich in Vitamin A, fiber and very low in calories until all the other ingredients are added. It is also loaded with an important antioxidant, beta-carotene, which may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer and offers protection against heart disease, as well as some degenerative aspects of aging. Consider using an egg substitute, light cream or low-fat evaporated milk in your recipe. Go for a pie crust with the lowest amount of transfat possible.

- **Cranberries:** This fruit adds more than just zip to your meals! Packed with Vitamin C, dietary fiber, manganese, and proanthocyanidins (a type of antioxidant to help prevent urinary tract infections), cranberries should be in our diets year round—not just the holidays. Cranberries add tangy flavor to everything from stuffing and sauces to beverages and barbecues.

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all-or-nothing mind-set.  
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special holiday foods,  
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- **Sweet potato:** The versatile sweet potato is ideal for the health-conscious food consumer and rich in potassium and antioxidants like Vitamin C and beta-carotene. Cut them up like chips or steak fries and lightly coat them with light olive oil, sea salt and dried rosemary, then bake them in the oven. Leave the skin on for extra fiber; just make sure you wash the potato first. The flavor is incredible. You'll feel better after eating this sweet potato rather than sweet potatoes that are "drowning" in butter, sugar and marshmallows.

- **Turkey:** In addition to being an excellent source of protein, turkey offers the least amount of fat per serving, among all other meats, if you pass on the skin. If you love gravy, ask for a small custard cup or dish to put gravy in, and dip the meat instead of pouring it on.
- **Green beans:** An all-time favorite is green bean casserole. Green beans are a very good source of Vitamin A, fiber, potassium, folate, and a good source of magnesium and riboflavin. Each of these nutrients plays a significant cardio-protective role. Green bean casserole in a traditional Thanksgiving meal is rather high in calories as it contains butter, cream of mushroom and cheese. This dish can be made with lower fat options like low-fat cream soup and still tastes great without the guilt.

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# Teaching children responsibility

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In the past 30 years or so, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women employed outside the home. Prior to that, it was often assumed that it was the wife/mother's responsibility to keep everything in the home clean, livable and presentable. However, in today's world—with everyone so busy with work, community and school activities—it is often hard to take care of everything we need to do. This can lead to stress and a feeling of being overwhelmed. This, in turn, may prevent us from having enough time to nurture, support and enjoy each other as a family.

There are many different ways, some very simple, to balance responsibilities within our family so no one person is stressed or overwhelmed for long periods of time. Responsible children will develop over time with continued parental guidance. As they are given simple chores and activities to do at home, children learn about responsibility. They also develop a sense of belonging, feel needed and gain a positive self-concept that will help them to become more independent adults.

Children who are taught about responsibility learn to work with others, gain skills needed to organize and complete a task, and may learn a new skill or improve on another. Parents also benefit from teaching responsibility by sharing the workload with children, allowing more time for family fun and activities.

A key point to remember about sharing responsibilities, especially of household tasks, is that it is

important for all members of the family to be involved in the *decision-making*. Give children opportunities to make decisions within the limits of their ability. If they are more involved in the planning, they are more likely to “buy in” with the plans. Communicating clearly is very important. Parents need to make sure the child understands what they say. Everyone should have the chance to express opinions

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and make suggestions. Here are some ideas to help start the process.

- **Create a chore list.** Identify daily, weekly, and monthly chores, both inside and outside the home.
- **Offer choices.** When possible, give children choices of the jobs they want to do.
- **Diversify responsibilities.** Although there is sometimes a perception of a chore being a “man's job” or a “woman's job,” it is important for family members to learn a variety of household tasks.
- **Rotate chore assignments.** Switch chores occasionally, especially for the tasks no one really wants to do. Anyone

can get bored doing the same thing over and over.

- **Do not expect perfection!** Children need to learn what is expected of them. Then they need time to learn the skills. Parents can easily do lots of tasks more quickly, such as making a bed. However, then children lose out on valuable “on-the-job” training.
- **Give guidance.** Remember that even though we, as parents, may have done the task too many times to count, our children still need help and direction when they tackle a new job.
- **Teach about consequences.** Be sure children understand both negative and positive consequences of their actions. Some parents believe in monetary or actual rewards for completing chores, while others believe in the values children learn, such as cooperation, participation and a feeling of responsibility.

Children's learning about responsibility is a long process that needs regular reinforcement. As a result, however, each family should have more time to share and play together, making the home a place where everyone is valued and cooperates.

Adapted from *Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices Curriculum for Youth*.  
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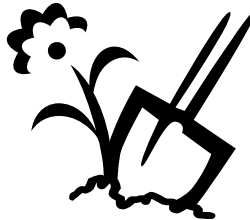
# Gardening without pain: Tips for using and modifying tools *(continued from page 1)*

- **Grip (cont.)** The handle should also be curved to fit the natural contour of the hand. You may also notice a depression or notch on the top of the handle. This feature serves as a resting place for your thumb when holding the tool. When your thumb is in this position, your wrist will be in a more neutral position as you garden. This allows for greater gripping strength and lessens the amount of stress on hand joints.
- **Handle length.** The length of the handle is also important. Longer handled tools provide more leverage and can allow for a two-handed grip, which distributes the work load to larger muscle groups in the body. Longer handled tools also allow you to work from a sitting or standing position so you don't have to bend all the way down to the ground. This can be important for a person who has stability issues or has trouble getting back up from the ground.
- **Gloves.** A pair of gloves will minimize stresses to the hand. Not only do gloves provide protection for the skin, but you can purchase gloves that have non-slip surfaces to help you grip the tools and extra padding to protect your hands.

## Tips for modifying tools

You can modify your existing tools to make them more ergonomically friendly. Be creative; many of these things may be just lying around your house.

- **Wind baseball tape** around the handles to create a larger, non-slip grip.
- **Purchase bicycle grips** and slide them onto the ends of tool handles.
- **Use foam water pipe insulation pieces** to create large, soft grips.



For more information on ergonomic and enabling gardening, visit:  
American Horticultural Therapy Association: [www.ahta.org](http://www.ahta.org)  
Gardenscape: [www.gardenscape.on.ca/pages/linksenable.htm](http://www.gardenscape.on.ca/pages/linksenable.htm)

## Party 'Tid-bites': Making healthy choices *(continued from page 2)*

### Other holiday treats

Nuts, dates, figs and dried fruit are popular holiday treats and can provide significant health benefits too. Nuts have mostly unsaturated fat, making them healthier choices. Serve nuts as snacks, like pecans, walnuts, almonds and peanuts in casseroles and salads, or in cookies and cakes.

Finally, just because you are trying to eat healthfully doesn't mean

you need to avoid celebrations or accept a few extra pounds. Forget the all-or-nothing mind-set. Depriving yourself of special holiday foods, or feeling guilty when you do enjoy them, isn't a healthful eating strategy. And deprivation and guilt certainly are not part of the holiday spirit!

#### Sources:

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John Wiley & Sons.

American Dietetic Association:  
<http://www.eatright.org>

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