



EXERCISES FOR GARDENERS

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You may find yourself using different parts of your body a little more this time of year as you plant and weed through your garden. You nurture seedlings and plants to grow into your own beautiful artistic oasis. After you see the huge accomplishment from your own hard work your muscles may feel stiff, achy and sore from the constant positions that aren't ergonomically good for your body. Remember, you need to nurture yourself so you can grow and achieve greater things than constant back or shoulder pain.

Take a break during your activities and try these exercises in your garden before you dig your next hole.

Upward Salute (Urdhva Hastasana) - Stand with feet hip distance apart, turn your arms outward with the palms facing one another and the thumbs pointing backward. With an inhale, sweep your arms shoulder distance apart up toward the ceiling, guiding the shoulders back and down away from the ears. Noticing a small bend in the back, being careful not to go further than comfortable. This pose helps open up your chest, which is closed in many of your gardening activities.

Lateral Stretch (Parsva Tadasana) - Stand with feet hip distance apart, place your left hand on your left hip. Reach your right hand toward the sky sliding the right shoulder blade away from your ear with an open chest. Stretching the right hand further to the left side making sure not to hinge at the hips and fall forward but feel like you're between two panes of glass. Repeat on both sides. This stretch helps counteract any stiffness in the spine.

Knees-to-Chest pose (Apanasana) - Lie on your back, bring your knees into your chest, interlace your hands below your knees, breathing naturally feel your hips and shoulders relax toward the earth feeling the stretch lengthen the spine. This is a gentle stretch to open up the lower back and hips.

Happy Baby Pose (Ananda Balasana) - from Knees-to-Chest pose, lift your feet in the air toward the sky, opening your knees slightly wider than your torso, then bring them up toward your armpits. Position each ankle directly over the knee, so your shins are perpendicular to the floor. Flex through the heels. Gently place your hands on your shins or on your feet or you may use a strap, pulling your feet down to create resistance. This movement release the lower back and counteracts the constant squatting you do when you garden.

Kristen Heim is a certified yoga and pilates practitioner and a long-time resident of Fairfax County. She teaches gentle, beginner and advanced yoga and pilates classes to the general adult population in Alexandria. Visit www.fierysunfitness.com or call (703) 863-3607 for more information.