

Getting Ready for Gardening Season



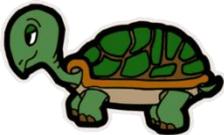
My husband and I took advantage of a break in winter weather to start getting our garden ready for spring planting. Now we are no longer spring chickens and are very aware that we must take it slow and easy but non-the-less we developed a new level of stiffness after what we thought was not too much gardening activity. My husband was lugging 50 bags of soil amendments and fighting the tiller. I was doing some hoeing, weed pulling and lots bending over and lifting pots to move from one location to another. As I was working I wondered if there were some exercises I could be doing ahead of time to help get those winter non-used muscles back into shape. Even people who are a lot younger than we are could benefit from adding a few pre-gardening exercises.



Thank goodness for the internet. On the other hand, TMI (too much information). I am going to show below some of the exercises I think would be helpful for me. There are many links on the internet for people who would like more information.



Your first step should always be to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.



Start slow. Just do a few of any exercise and build up to more.

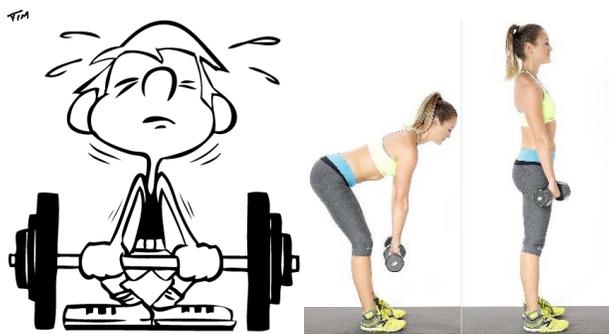


Look for exercises that work on your core muscles, develop strength and help with balance.



Walking

Walking is always a good way to begin to get back in shape. Begin by adding extra steps to your daily chores. For example, park your car farther away from the grocery store, do an extra lap around the mall, march in place while watching commercials, etc. You get the idea.



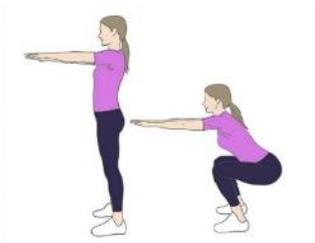
Deadlift

No we are not talking about Olympic competition. We are talking about pulling weeds, lifting bags of fertilizer, potted plants and large watering cans. With weights in both hands bend over being sure to keep your back straight. Bend your knees and hips but not your waist. Squat and use your thigh muscles to lift.



Bending Over

Don't be a cashew. Keep back straight when weeding from standing position (appropriate length tool), and squat to weed closer to ground or bend at the hips...back parallel to the ground; swivel hips puts the load on ball and socket joints, made for taking that kind of action; curved back (cashew) stresses discs between vertebrae and can lead to back pain.



Squats

We squat to hand weed, we squat to harvest some crops. Regular squats and front loaded squats both help to build those core muscles. For the front loaded squats hold the weights up at your chest and squat down bending from the knees and hip straight and then stand back up.



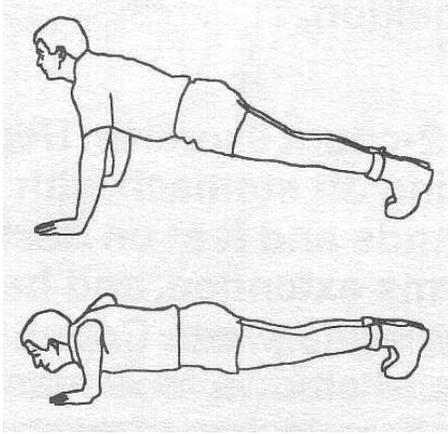
Wood Chop

Think of swing an axe to chop wood or the rotating motion to rake or hoe. Lift a weight from the outside of one knee to over the shoulder on the other side.



Farmer's Walk or Carry

This exercise will help you get ready to carry watering cans, pails of compost and baskets full of garden produce. Just practice walking with full grocery bags or jugs of water. Keep your abdominal muscles tight.



Pushups

This will help with push wheel barrows and lawn mowers. Full pushups if you can or if you are like me just a partial pushup. Remember to keep the back straight.



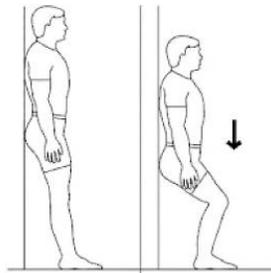
Renegade Row

For things like pulling vines off trees or starting a mower or tiller the renegade row can help develop the right muscles. Since full pushups are beyond my capability I just practice my pleading voice and pitiful puppy dog look so that I can ask for help.



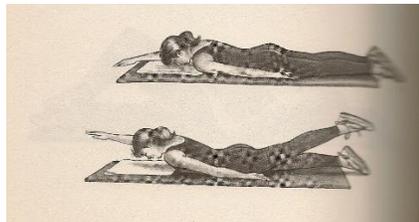
Lunges

Use lunges to work your thighs and buttocks. Remember don't be a cashew. Keep that back straight. Lunges are also helpful for balance.



Wall Slides

Wall slides can help strengthen your back and legs. Slide down, hold for 5 seconds and then slide back up.



Leg Raises on Stomach

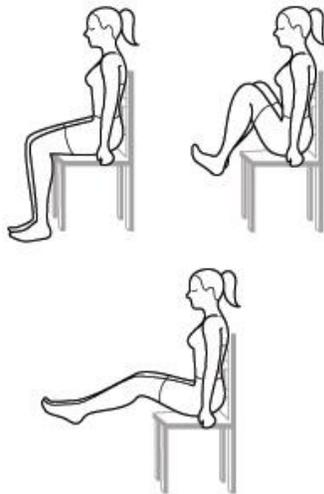
Another exercise to strengthen legs and back is leg raises. Hold for 10 seconds and then switch sides. I enhance mine by raising the opposite arm.



Straight Leg Raise

Leg Raises on Back

Raise one leg, count to 10 and slowly lower it. If this is difficult at first try keeping the non-raised leg with knee bent and foot flat on the floor.



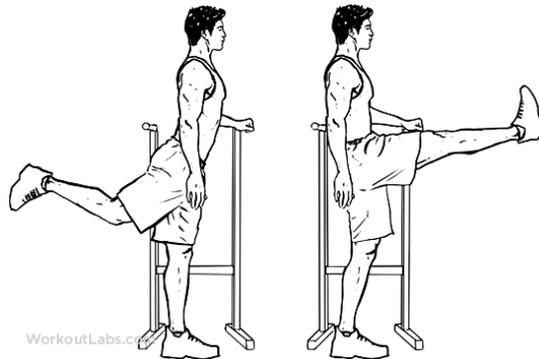
Leg Raises While Seated

This one is great for your back and even greater if you can do it while watching TV.



Partial Sit-ups

There are many varieties of partial sit-ups. They all help those stomach muscles.



Leg Swings

For hip and leg muscles do leg swings. Be sure to hold on to something.



The most important point is to stop being a couch potato. Get up and get moving. Soon you will be planting, hoeing, raking, harvesting with the best of them.



Betty Jane Hughes, Hanover Master Gardener

[Spring Training for Gardeners - University of Vermont](https://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/training.html)
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