

Gardening and arthritis

This booklet provides information
and answers to your questions
about gardening and arthritis.



Arthritis Research UK produce
and print our booklets entirely
from charitable donations.

Will having arthritis stop me gardening?



Gardening doesn't have to be a problem if you have arthritis, and it can play an important part in keeping up your physical activity. In this booklet we'll look at how garden layout, the right tools and pacing techniques can help you to look after your garden without causing pain afterwards. We'll also suggest where you can find out more and how to find equipment to help you.

At the back of this booklet you'll find a brief glossary of medical words – we've underlined these when they're first used.

What's inside?

3 Gardening and arthritis at a glance

4 Protecting your joints

7 Garden layout

- Paths and beds
- Containers
- Herbaceous borders
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- The deep-bed method
- The lawn
- Garden buildings
- The greenhouse
- Hedges and fencing
- Garden seating

13 Maintaining the garden

- Digging the soil
- Weeding
- Sowing seeds
- Planting out
- Watering the plants
- Pruning
- Mowing and clipping
- Keeping the garden tidy

21 Glossary

21 Where can I find out more?

24 We're here to help



Having arthritis may make some things difficult, but it doesn't have to stop you doing the things you enjoy. Changing the way you do certain things can help you keep up your daily activities and hobbies.

Having a garden doesn't have to be hard work. Following the tips in this booklet, like using different tools or growing different plants, may make it easier for you. Many people enjoy having a low-maintenance or natural garden – you can find out what type of garden is suitable for you.

At a glance

Gardening and arthritis

Not surprisingly, looking after your garden can be more difficult if you have arthritis or a similar condition, but it doesn't mean you have to give up something you enjoy.

There are a number of ways of overcoming difficulties with gardening jobs. The methods you choose will depend on how arthritis affects you – for example, whether you have trouble getting about generally, find it difficult to bend to ground level or have pain and stiffness in your hands and wrists. These will help you stay in control of your garden – not the other way round.

How can I protect my joints?

To help protect your joints from unnecessary strain you can try:

- changing the layout of paths and beds for easier access
- selecting easy-to-care-for plants
- choosing the right tools or adapting the ones you have
- doing tasks differently, for example sitting down to plant seeds so you don't have to keep bending down.

You may need to get help with some of the heavier jobs, especially if you're making changes to the layout of your garden, but make sure your helper understands that the aim is to allow you to manage your garden yourself.



Make gardening easier by protecting your joints and pacing yourself.

How can I fight tiredness?

When you're gardening, don't overdo it. Pace yourself by:

- taking regular breaks – use a timer if necessary
- switching between harder and gentler tasks.

Where can I get more advice?

If certain tasks cause pain in particular joints, an occupational therapist may be able to help by:

- finding equipment that will make the job easier
- suggesting another way of doing tasks
- recommending splints to support your joints
- discussing when to take painkillers before you start gardening.

Protecting your joints

Gardening is a really good form of exercise, but doing some actions over and over can lead to inflammation and pain if you have arthritis, making it necessary to rest completely until the flare-up passes. You should aim for a balance between exercising your joints and muscles to stay mobile without straining them. 'Little and often' is usually the best approach, but switching between different jobs will also

help. The following tips should help to avoid flare-ups of pain:

Change task to reduce repeated strain on the same joints. Don't be tempted to press on until the job is finished. Try switching from one task after 20 minutes to another, allowing yourself a rest if you need it, so that you rest some joints and exercise different ones for a while. For example, break up harder jobs like hoeing weeds with spells of something

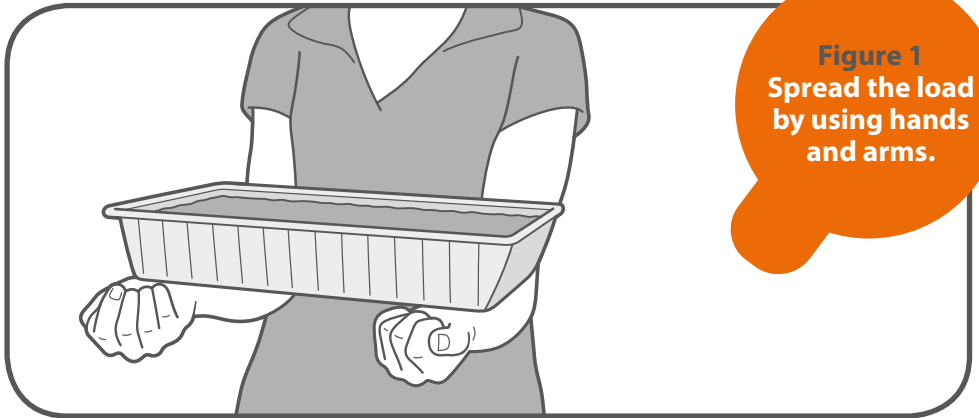


Figure 1
Spread the load
by using hands
and arms.

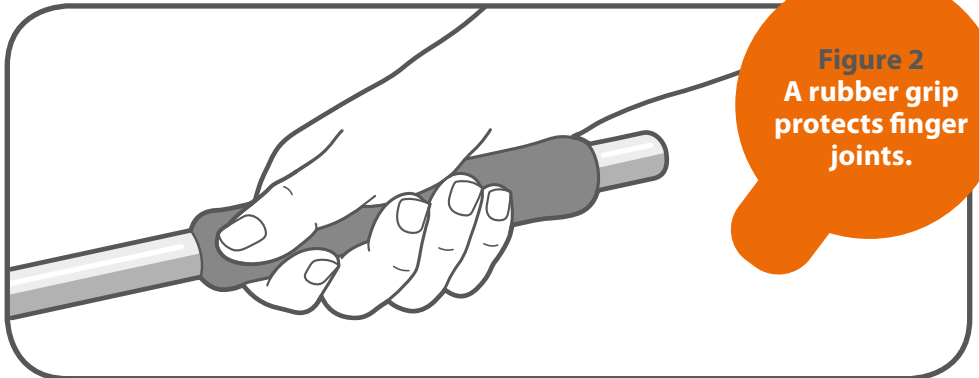


Figure 2
A rubber grip
protects finger
joints.

gentler like pricking out seedlings. Use a timer to help you pace yourself if you think it'd be useful.

Spread the load. Try to spread the weight of items when you carry them by resting them on your forearms and hands, rather than trying to pick them up with your fingers only. Try resting a tray of seedlings on your forearms, for example. Keep your elbows tucked in to reduce the strain on your shoulders and elbows (see Figure 1).

Use a garden stool. This will limit your reach so you'll need to plan your borders around this or invest in lightweight, long-reach or extendable handled tools. However, it's less tiring and reduces the load on weight-bearing joints. And because you're closer to the ground you can use shorter, and therefore lighter, tools. Make sure you can get up easily from the stool – avoid sitting too long and getting stiff as this will make rising more difficult.

Get a good grip. Slip a spongy rubber sleeve over the handle of a hoe or rake to increase grip. This will reduce the strain on your knuckles and jarring of the joints (see Figure 2). A good pair of gloves also helps you to grip more easily. If you find it difficult to find gloves to fit – for example, if your arthritis has caused hand deformities – think about trying gloves made from elasticated material that fits on the hand and can then be strapped using Velcro (all part of the glove). Alternatively, gloves that don't have the full finger length but which have flexible material may be useful.

Wear splints. An occupational therapist will be able to advise on whether splints might help to support the joints of your hands and wrists and reduce the strain of some gardening tasks. A wrist splint may be helpful if you have painful or weak wrists, while a thumb splint may be useful for tasks that need you to have a tight grip for a long time (for example pruning). Wearing gardening gloves over splints will keep them clean and also increase your grip.

Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary effort. If walking is difficult, avoid too many journeys up and down the garden by taking all the things you need in a wheelbarrow, bucket or trug. This will cause less strain on your hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders. Try not to start too many things that must be attended to whether you feel like it or not, and don't worry too much about weeds and not getting all your jobs done – they can always wait for another day.

Seek help with heavier jobs. Decide beforehand what you need help with and what you prefer to do yourself. Make sure that a well-meaning and enthusiastic helper doesn't take on more than you really want them to.

Avoid heavy lifting. If you can't get help lifting bags of compost, especially from the boot of a car, think about buying two small bags instead of one large one. Many manufacturers now include handles on their compost bags, which makes them much easier to carry.



Arthritis Research UK

Gardening and arthritis

Use the correct tools for the job.

Use lightweight or long-handled tools, carry items in a wheeled device and keep gardening cutters sharp and well maintained for ease of use (do this with care if you decide to do this yourself).

- ❗ If a particular task causes difficulty or discomfort, it may help to speak to an occupational therapist. They'll help you to understand why the task is causing pain and suggest changes to the way you do tasks or tools that will reduce the strain.

Planning your garden and choosing low-maintenance plants will make things easier if you go on holiday or into hospital, or if you or don't feel up to gardening for a while.

Lawns need mowing regularly throughout the summer, so if you're often away from home and don't have reliable help it may be worth replacing the lawn with a low-maintenance area such as paving or gravel. You can leave spaces here and there between slabs for growing suitable plants, or you could grow plants in pots on the paved/gravelled area.

Plants like elephant's ears, cranesbill, lavender and periwinkle backed by shrubs such as barberry, escallonia, senecio and viburnum can take care of themselves for long periods once their roots are deep in the soil.

Create a wildlife area using wildflower seeds, which don't usually need tending, although you'll need to prepare the

ground well beforehand to avoid getting more weeds than flowers. This is also good for encouraging wildlife into the garden.

There are a number of books and websites on low-maintenance gardening which will suggest plants that don't need a great deal of attention.

i See Arthritis Research UK booklets

Looking after your joints when you have arthritis; Splints for arthritis; What is arthritis?

Garden layout

Working in the garden can be much easier if you give some thought to its layout. You may need to get some help initially to make changes to your garden, but in the longer term this should allow you to manage most of your gardening jobs for yourself.



Selecting plants that don't need a lot of attention can make it easier to look after your garden.

Try the deep-bed method for an easier way of growing vegetables.

Paths and beds

Ideally there should be firm paths alongside the beds and borders, especially if you have difficulty keeping your balance on uneven ground. You can then tend to most of the area without having to step onto the soil. The beds should be quite narrow so you can reach the middle and back without stretching.

Non-slip paving slabs make safe paths, and they can be used for shallow steps where the ground level changes. Wooden handrails alongside steps are also helpful.

If you find it difficult to bend to ground level or need to work from a wheelchair, a raised bed would be helpful. If you have a sloping garden, you can make a terrace by building a low wall and filling behind with soil, which has the effect of making a raised bed. Even raising the soil level a small amount will make the bed easier to manage.

Containers

Containers are another way of making sure you can work at a convenient height. Annual bedding plants, heathers, herbs, spring bulbs and even smaller vegetables and fruit trees can be grown in this way. Heavy tubs can be put on wheels in case you need to move them around. Wheeled containers with a braking system are also available – these may be easier to manage, but they're more expensive.

Herbaceous borders

Traditional herbaceous borders need a lot of attention – staking, pruning, dividing, dead-heading and weeding. You can reduce the need for staking taller plants by choosing self-supporting varieties, for instance lupins, phlox, yarrow and Japanese anemones.

If you can't reach the back of the border easily, it's better to plant shrubs that need less attention. Spurge, spindle tree, spotted laurel, cinquefoil and Mexican orange blossom are good examples. Small annuals such as pansies and marigolds can be planted near the path, but an edging of pinks or lady's mantle will create less work.

Fruit

You can buy fruit trees that have been grafted onto dwarfing rootstocks. This restricts their growth, making the fruit easy to reach. You can grow fruit trees as cordons in a slanting row, or espaliers and fans, perhaps against a wall or fence.

You can restrict their height to whatever suits you by pruning in August.

Gooseberry plants can be grown on a leg – a single clear stem 60–90 cm (2–3 feet) high. This saves you bending down to pick them. Strawberries are easier to gather if they're grown through holes in a barrel or in hanging baskets.

Vegetables

If you want to grow tomatoes and courgettes outside but your soil isn't good enough, you can use growbags. Growbags that have been used for growing tomatoes and cucumbers in the greenhouse can be used again the following year for salad crops such as lettuce, radishes, spring onions and beetroot. You can place the bags on a bench if it's easier to reach them. Many fruit and vegetables can also be grown in hanging baskets, which can make them easier to tend and harvest.

The deep-bed method

A labour-saving way of growing vegetables is the deep-bed method. You may need help with digging the plot to start with, but then no further digging is needed for several years. Divide the plot into strips 1.2 m (4 feet) wide, separated by paved paths. Dig the ground over well, adding farmyard manure, peat or well-made garden compost into each trench. Don't walk over the soil after this stage. All cultivation, planting, weeding, feeding and harvesting is done from the paths using long-handled tools.

Because the soil isn't compacted, sowings of root crops can be spread more densely than normal over the whole surface – the growing plants push each other sideways in the easily crumbled soil. You don't need to sow in rows, and planting many seeds will make it harder for weeds to grow.



Joint protection is about using joints in ways that will help to reduce pain and strain and allow you to continue with your daily activities.

Using different tools or adapting the ones you already have can help you to protect your joints. You can also try changing the way you do things that you find painful or uncomfortable.

You'll need to lay a fresh supply of manure on the surface during the following autumn. This will work down into the soil by the action of worms and by weathering during the winter. A little light cultivation in the spring will make sure it's completely mixed in.

The lawn

Some people increase the size of their lawn to reduce the area of cultivated borders. However, a lawn needs regular attention if it's to look its best. If you find it difficult to look after, it might be better to have narrow beds separated by paths or pave/gravel the area, leaving spaces to plant shrubs or annuals.

Island beds in lawns make mowing more complicated. It's easier to move the mower around if the lawn is a simple shape with straight edges. Make sure the mower is stored somewhere that you can access easily. If you're buying a new mower, try to choose a lightweight model with a large-grip handlebar and easy-to-push buttons.

Garden buildings

If you need buildings such as a greenhouse, potting shed, tool shed and cold frame, try to place them near each other. Clustering buildings saves carrying pots, compost and seed trays unnecessarily.

The lids of some glazed cold frames are very heavy to lift. A raised frame with a hinged lid covered with lightweight corrugated plastic sheeting and connected to a pulley and counterbalance weight is much safer and easier to manage.

The greenhouse

The staging in a greenhouse should be at the right height. You should be able to work comfortably while sitting on a chair. You may prefer to rest your elbows and forearms on the staging while you work. If all the staging is the same height, it's easy to slide trays along without lifting them.

Thermostatically controlled fan heaters, automatic vent openers and capillary watering systems go a long way to providing the right growing conditions with minimum effort. By using growbags for tomatoes and cucumbers you can even avoid digging the border soil.

! If you use a wheelchair, choose your greenhouse with care. Make sure the doorways are wide enough and the thresholds low enough for wheelchair access.

Hedges and fences

Even slow-growing hedges like yew need trimming once a year, but hand shears can cause joint pain and some hedge trimmers are quite heavy. Keep your hedges low so you don't need to stretch too much. Lavender and box make good low hedges for dividing up the garden. A row of fruit trees grown as cordons makes a decorative hedge, perhaps to separate an ornamental garden from the vegetable plot.

A wooden fence that's been put up properly and treated with preservative will last for many years without attention and can be used as a support for climbing plants.



Garden seating

Garden seating shouldn't be too low and should have a supportive backrest. Having seating in your garden will encourage you to pace yourself and take frequent breaks, especially if it's placed in the areas you work in most. It'll also give you somewhere to admire and enjoy your work from.

Maintaining the garden

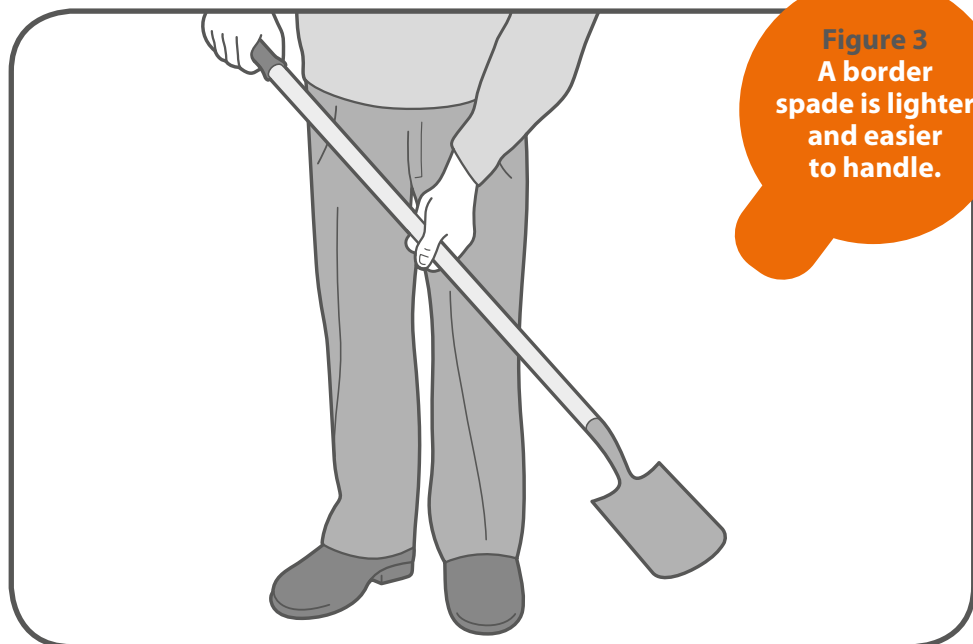
! There's a wide variety of garden tools designed to make cultivation, weeding, pruning and tidying up easier. If possible, you should handle the tools before buying them so you can test them for weight and balance.

Digging the soil

Improving the quality of the soil will make cultivation easier. Heavy clay can be made lighter by digging in farmyard manure or good garden compost. Adding sharp sand or grit allows air into the soil, making it easier for roots to bed in. It also makes it easier to dig in the future. Turning the soil over in autumn exposes it to winter frosts and makes it easier to break down, ready for sowing the following season.

When you do need to dig, bear in mind the following:

- A border spade is lighter and easier to handle than a digging spade (see Figure 3). The blade is smaller so you won't be tempted to dig large spadefuls.



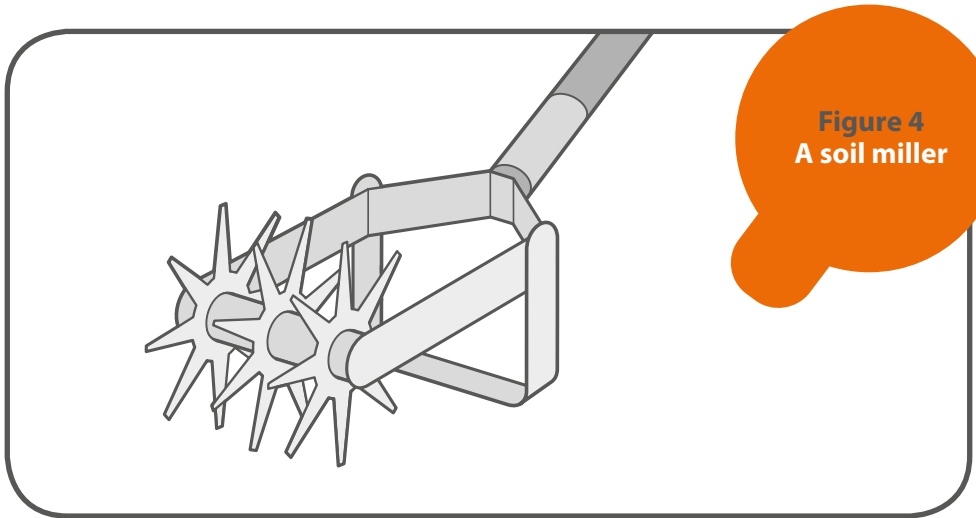


Figure 4
A soil miller

- Soil tends to cling to ordinary carbon steel spades, which adds weight, so stainless steel is a better choice. It's also easier to clean afterwards.
- Spades with extra-long handles make it easier to move the soil and reduce the need to bend.
- If your soil is light and crumbly, use a border fork instead of a spade – it's lighter and moves through the soil more easily.
- Clamping an extra handle part-way down the shaft of your spade or fork saves bending too far and provides a comfortable grip for your lower hand without twisting your wrist.

If the soil is light and sandy, you may not need to dig at all. A soil miller is a tool with star-shaped wheels that break down the soil into fine particles as you move

it backwards and forwards (see Figure 4). Well-rotted farmyard manure spread over the surface can be mixed into the soil with the soil miller. This is a good tool for use with a deep-bed system.

Weeding

You can reduce the number of weeds you have to deal with by covering the soil with a 5-cm (2-inch) layer of shredded bark. This stops the soil getting any light and makes it more difficult for weeds to grow. Alternatively, you can cover the bed with black polythene, cut slits into the sheet and plant seeds through the holes. Scatter a layer of gravel over the top to hold down the polythene and improve the border's appearance.

Annual weeds should be hoed while they're young and easy to deal with. We don't recommend a draw hoe or a Dutch hoe because the blade has to be lifted

and lowered over and over, causing strain and jarring of the joints. A push-pull hoe skims the soil surface back and forth, chopping off the weeds at ground level with minimum effort. You can fit the hoe with an extra-long handle if you need to.

Weeding by hand is tiring if you can't easily reach down to ground level, but you can try using a weed puller instead. A weed puller has a steel blade that is pushed into the ground alongside the weed. Closing the handle grips the weed and pulls it out. Although this only deals with one weed at a time, it saves raking together and picking the weeds up afterwards. It's also easy to use sitting down.

Sowing seeds

Tools are available to help with sowing seeds if you have trouble bending down to ground level. The loaded tool is pushed along the drill, emptying seed as it goes along. This may not be suitable for sowing peas or beans, but you can sow these by dropping them into the trench down a length of plastic pipe. Use a lightweight mini-rake to draw a shallow layer of soil over the trench to cover the seeds. You can also buy or make your own 'seed tapes', which are strips of soft paper with seeds attached at even spaces. You can lay these into a shallow trench and cover them over with soil.



Planting out

Planting out summer bedding plants is another job that involves a lot of bending. You can avoid this by only growing shrubs and herbaceous perennials. Alternatively, you can dig a hole using a long-handled trowel (see Figure 5), put the plant on the blade and lower it into the soil. You can do this sitting down if it's easier. Pot-grown plants are the most suitable for this method.

Watering the plants

Ideally a mains water supply should be laid to a central point so that you can water any part of the garden using a short length of hosepipe or sprinkler. Carrying water in cans and buckets is very tiring and puts a lot of strain on your hands. Instead of filling a large can from a tap and carrying it to the bottom of the garden, place water butts where you need them most. You can fill them from time to time with a hosepipe if you need to, and dip a small

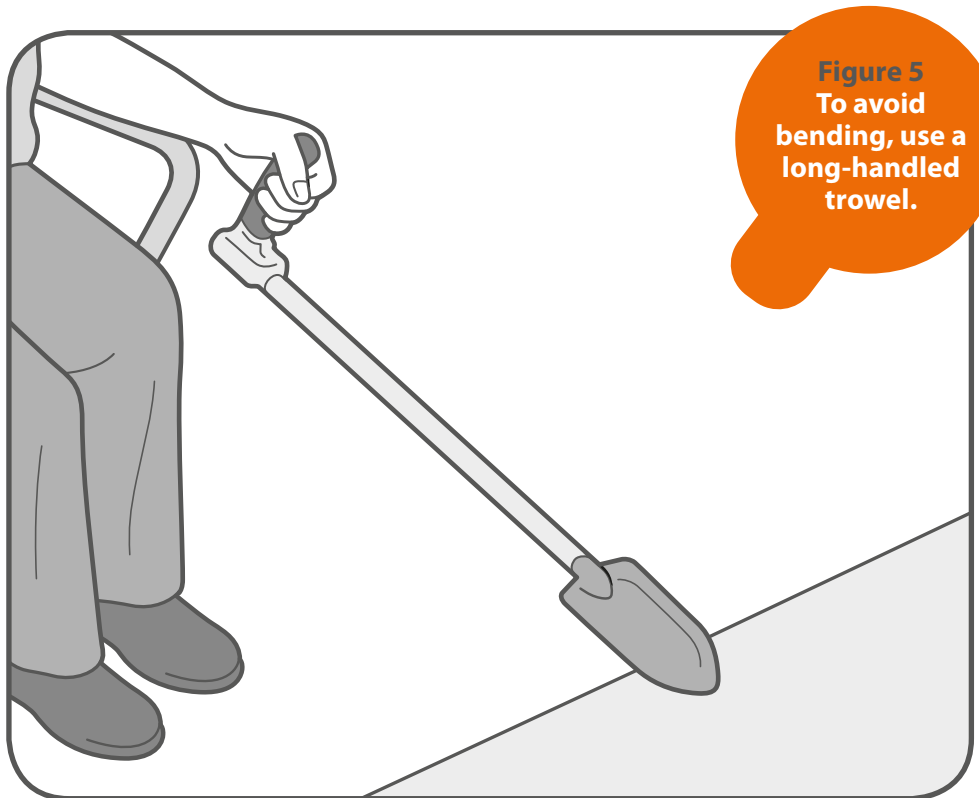


Figure 5
To avoid bending, use a long-handled trowel.



A push-pull hoe can deal with annual weeds with minimum effort.

watering can into the tanks when you need to water the plants. When carrying and using a watering can, use both hands in order to distribute the weight. Alternatively, you can attach a small length of hose to an outside tap if you have one.

If you have free-draining borders that are in full sun, it's best to use them for growing drought-resistant plants such as wallflowers, rosemary, broom and cotton lavender, which come to no harm if they dry out for a few days. This will help reduce the amount of watering you need to do. Mulching with shredded bark reduces water loss, but the mulch should only be applied to soil that's already damp.

Hanging-baskets keep their moisture longer in light shade, and plants like fuchsias, ivy-leafed geraniums, lobelias and busy Lizzies thrive in these conditions. A hanging-basket sprayer is useful for watering a basket that's too high to reach with a watering can. You can buy special hanging-basket compost with crystals that help keep moisture in so you don't have to water so often. Crystals are also available for mixing in with standard compost.

Pruning

Gripping and squeezing of pruning tools over a length of time can hurt finger joints, so have regular breaks or spells of doing other jobs, and try to use tools with padded handles. The following tools may make things a little easier:

A ratchet pruner takes less effort to cut through twigs than most secateurs. Instead of one big squeeze it takes several bites to make the cut, reducing strain on the knuckles (see Figure 6).

A two-handed lopper will give good leverage without much effort and can be held lightly against the palms and wrists, protecting the finger joints from strain. Some manufacturers also produce 'ratchet loppers' – these have a ratchet mechanism which will hold the blades in place if you need to stop mid-cut.

Pruners, loppers and secateurs with a cut-and-hold action hold the cut stem in their jaws so it doesn't fall to the ground, which saves bending to pick up the cuttings (see Figure 7).

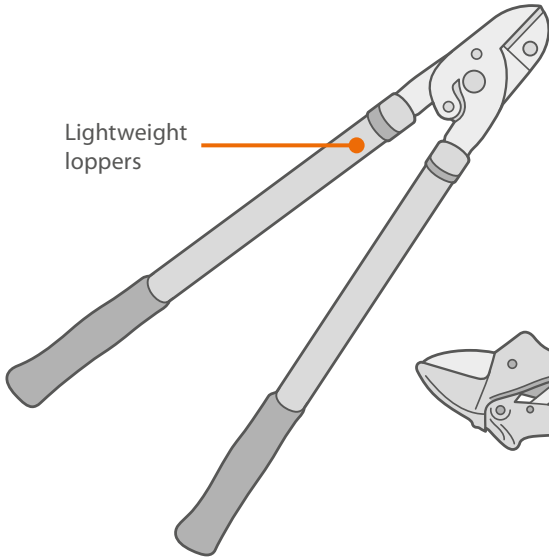
English trimming shears can be used for light trimming after the flowering of heathers and lavender. You don't need to move your fingers much to squeeze the blades together, and you can use them one-handed.

Mowing and clipping

Most lawnmowers have power-driven blades and many electric models are fairly light to push. Cordless battery-operated mowers are now available. These can be easier to move around, although some models do have heavy batteries.

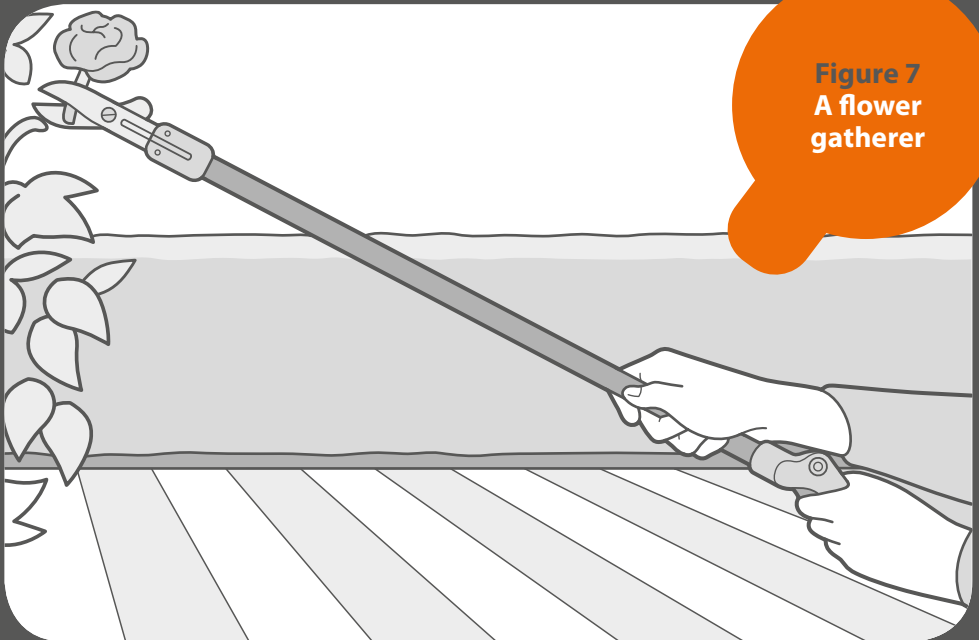
Figure 6
Pruning

Lightweight
loppers



Ratchet
pruner

Figure 7
**A flower
gatherer**



A barrow with two wheels and a bar-type handle can be helpful.

We don't recommend petrol-engined mowers for people with arthritis because they're usually very heavy to move and manage. If you prefer a manual mower, look for one with a single horizontal handlebar rather than two separate handles – you can then do some of the pushing with your stomach to reduce strain on your arms and wrists. If you have a large garden, a ride-on mower might be an option.

You don't have to collect grass cuttings – in dry weather especially it's better to leave them on the lawn – so you can reduce the weight you have to push by leaving off the grassbox.

Lightweight edging shears with long handles that are generously padded will give a more comfortable grip and reduce jarring of the joints. Or you could use a nylon cord trimmer that operates vertically – you simply walk along holding it against the edge of the lawn.

Keeping the garden tidy

A rake can be fitted with a smaller head for raking between plants in the border. You can collect small amounts of weeds, leaves and so on in a bucket or bag. There are tools available to help pick up garden rubbish without bending.

If you have a large garden, you may need a wheelbarrow. A barrow with two wheels and a bar-type handle can be helpful. The weight of the contents rests mainly on the axle rather than on your arms. This type of barrow is more stable and easier to empty without bending down or twisting.



Glossary

Flare-up – periods where your joints become inflamed and painful, sometimes known as ‘flares’

Inflammation – a normal reaction to injury or infection of living tissues. The flow of blood increases, resulting in heat and redness in the affected areas, and fluid and cells leak into the tissue, causing swelling.

Occupational therapist – a trained specialist who uses a range of strategies and specialist equipment to help people to reach their goals and maintain their independence by giving practical advice on equipment, adaptations or by changing the way you do things (such as learning to dress using one-handed methods following hand surgery).

Where can I find out more?

If you’ve found this information useful you might be interested in these other titles from our range:

Conditions

- *What is arthritis?*

Therapies

- *Occupational therapy and arthritis*

Self-help and daily living

- *Fatigue and arthritis*
- *Looking after your joints when you have arthritis*
- *Splints for arthritis of the wrist and hand*

You can download all of our booklets and leaflets from our website or order them by contacting:

Arthritis Research UK

Copeman House
St Mary’s Court,
St Mary’s Gate, Chesterfield,
Derbyshire S41 7TD
Phone: 0300 790 0400
www.arthritisresearchuk.org

Related organisations

The following organisations may be able to provide additional advice and information:

Arthritis Care

Floor 4, Linen Court
10 East Road
London N1 6AD
Phone: 020 7380 6500
Helpline: 0808 800 4050
Email: info@arthritiscare.org.uk
www.arthritiscare.org.uk

College of Occupational Therapists

106–114 Borough High Street
Southwark, London SE1 1LB
Phone: 020 7357 6480
www.cot.org.uk

Thrive

The Geoffrey Udall Centre
Beech Hill
Reading RG7 2AT
Phone: 0118 988 5688
www.thrive.org.uk
www.carryongardening.org.uk

The following companies supply gardening equipment. You may be able to buy their products from your local garden centre or hardware store, or from online retailers.

Atco

GGP UK Limited
Unit 8, Bluewater Estate
Bell Close, Plympton
Plymouth PL7 4JH
Phone: 0845 601 4944
www.atco.co.uk

A Wright & Son Ltd

475 Ecclesall Road
Sheffield S11 8PP
Phone: 0114 268 5701
Email: orderonline@penknives-and-scissors.co.uk
www.penknives-and-scissors.co.uk

Burgon & Ball Ltd

La Plata Works, Holme Lane
Sheffield S6 4JY
Phone: 0114 233 8262
Email: enquiries@burgonandball.com
www.burgonandball.com

Culverwells

Station Road, Robertsbridge
East Sussex TN32 5DG
Phone: 01580 880567
Email: info@culverwells.co.uk
www.culverwells.co.uk

Darlac Ltd

Unit E, Deseronto Trading Estate
St Marys Road
Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EW
Phone: 01753 547790
www.darlac.co.uk

Eden Greenhouses Ltd

The Distribution Centre, Stoke Road
Stoke Orchard, nr. Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 7RS
Phone: 01242 676625
Email: mail@eden-greenhouses.com
www.eden-greenhouses.com

Fiskars UK Ltd

Bennerley Road, Bulwell
Nottingham NG6 8PE
Phone: 0115 927 7335
<http://eng-uk.fiskars.com>

Forest Garden Ltd

291 and 296 Hartlebury Trading Estate
Hartlebury
Worcestershire DY10 4JB
Phone: 0844 248 9801
Email: info@forestgarden.co.uk
www.forestgarden.co.uk

Hayter Limited

Spellbrook, Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire CM23 4BU
Phone: 01279 723444
Email: sales@hayter.co.uk
www.hayter.co.uk

Hozelock Ltd

Midpoint Park, Birmingham B76 1AB
Phone: 0121 313 1122
www.hozelock.com

Arthritis Research UK

Gardening and arthritis

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Charles House Park Farm

Kelvedon Road Inworth

Colchester C05 9SH

Phone: 01376 573476

Email: custserv@peta-uk.com

www.peta-uk.com

Spear & Jackson plc

Customer Service

Atlas Way, Atlas North

Sheffield S4 7QQ

Phone: 0114 281 4242

Email: sales@neill-tools.co.uk

www.spear-and-jackson.com

Trellis

40 St John Street

Perth PH1 5SP

Phone: 01738 624348 or 07770 724399

Email: info@trellisscotland.org.uk

www.trellisscotland.org.uk

Trellis is charity which supports health through horticulture. They provide information and fieldworkers who can visit you at home to support therapeutic gardening projects.

Wolf Tools

Wolf Garden Division

E P Barrus Ltd

Launton Road, Bicester

Oxfordshire OX26 4UR

www.wolf-garten.co.uk

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We're here to help

Arthritis Research UK is the charity leading the fight against arthritis.

We're the UK's fourth largest medical research charity and fund scientific and medical research into all types of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

We're working to take the pain away for sufferers with all forms of arthritis and helping people to remain active. We'll do this by funding high-quality research, providing information and campaigning.

Everything we do is underpinned by research.

We publish over 60 information booklets which help people affected by arthritis to understand more about the condition, its treatment, therapies and how to help themselves.

We also produce a range of separate leaflets on many of the drugs used for arthritis and related conditions. We recommend that you read the relevant leaflet for more detailed information about your medication.

Please also let us know if you'd like to receive our quarterly magazine, *Arthritis Today*, which keeps you up to date with current research and education news, highlighting key projects that we're

funding and giving insight into the latest treatment and self-help available.

We often feature case studies and have regular columns for questions and answers, as well as readers' hints and tips for managing arthritis.

Tell us what you think

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A team of people contributed to this booklet. The original text was written by Tim Spurgeon and revised by Cathy Rickhuss of Thrive, who have expertise in the subject. It was assessed at draft stage by specialist occupational therapist Kate Hackett, head of occupational therapy Janet Harkess, MSc course leader (Rehabilitation) Dr Neil Osborne and occupational therapist Julie Weekes. An **Arthritis Research UK** editor revised the text to make it easy to read, and a non-medical panel, including interested societies, checked it for understanding. An **Arthritis Research UK** medical advisor, Sarah Houghton, is responsible for the content overall.

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