# Gardening with Osteoarthritis

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## Gardening With Osteoarthritis: Fall Clean Up

If you love gardening, or you need to do a major clean up for this fall, you may be worried about your joints. Consider the following tips to keep you gardening with osteoarthritis – it is still possible to enjoy your time in the garden without causing your joints more pain or stiffness.

### Choose The Right Gardening Tools

You can get gardening tools designed for people just like you – they are easier to use, and more comfortable on your joints. Many of them have longer handles, with special built-in grips, which are usually thicker and shaped to fit hands. Many also have extra features to improve leverage. Some of these special tools are tested by Arthritis Foundation to make sure they are arthritis friendly.

Your watering system should include a hose caddy, to avoid retrieving the hose each time you need to water the plants. Use a wagon or cart to avoid lifting and carrying tools or leaves, and don't forget to protect your hands with gardening gloves – you want to avoid any injury or infections.

### Plan Ahead

Think about how to create a garden that is easy to maintain; it should require little planting, trimming or other tasks that may be too repetitive and therefore hard on your joints. For example, plant raised flower beds rather than short flowers (the taller the better as you will have to bend less). Annual flowers versus perennial flowers? You will need to work less in the garden if you choose perennial flowers because they grow each and every year after you plant them, whereas the annuals have to be re-planted regularly. Also consider the fact that some flowers need water daily, while others less frequently. Next time you to a gardening center, do some research and ask the flower specialist all these details.

### Consult an Occupational or Physiotherapist

You may need to modify your gardening technique to avoid extra pressure on your joints. An occupational therapist can help you teach how to properly sit, bend, rich and lift, using the largest and the strongest joints, while avoiding the single small or painful joints. You may find a small stool helpful – rather than kneeling for long periods of time, you can just sit on this stool, and it will be much easier to get up and down.

### Listen to your Body

It is also important to take breaks and stretch. Sitting in the same position for too long will lead to pain and stiffness. Listen to your body. If you have a bad day and you experience lots of pain, you can always postpone the cleaning in the garden, or ask for a friend or relative to help.

If you feel you have more energy and are pain free, consider cleaning up the garden during this time. Try to work in the mornings, but not after lunch or dinner. Allow your body to digest your food and relax.