



Down and Dirty: Gardening for everyone

The effort required to maintain a garden can be reduced by using energy saving techniques, appropriate equipment and good design principles.

Garden design

Consider adapting the garden using design features that can make gardening more manageable:

- Minimise the size and number of high maintenance garden beds.
- Avoid choosing plants that require considerable care.
- Weeding can be reduced with ground covers or thickly planted perennials, and by mulching or using chemical control.
- Raised garden beds, large pots and urns reduce the need for bending.
- Terracing steep slopes to create flat areas can make gardening and mowing easier.
- Paved or hard surfaces can be an attractive alternative to lawn areas.
- Automatic watering systems eliminate the effort required for hand-hosing, and can improve water-use efficiency.

Kneelers and stools

Garden kneelers with handles at the sides help you to kneel down and stand up. Many kneelers can be turned upside down to form a low stool. Low stools are useful whilst doing gardening tasks in low garden beds, particularly if kneeling is difficult or painful.



Hand tools

Appropriate hand tools are easier to use and help maintain good posture. Lightweight tools are easier and less tiring to use. Look for mechanisms that reduce the operating force required, e.g. ratchet mechanisms on secateurs. Small, sharp tools are often easier to lift and manipulate. Some tools can be adapted for left-handed users, and others adapted for one-handed use with hook-and-loop tape.

Independent Living Centre Tasmania

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Long handled tools

Long handled tools eliminate the need to bend and reach, and can be used when standing or seated. They provide greater leverage and require less physical effort. Some tools allow the handle length to be altered to suit individual users and the tool head to be changed between different styles of handles.



Long handled weeders eliminate the need to bend to pull out weeds. The weeder grips the weeds when the tines are engaged and releases them when lifted from the ground.

Picking fruit from high branches is a common problem, especially for people experiencing balance or mobility difficulties. Fruit pickers are designed to pick and catch fruit. They have telescopic handles and come with a collection bag.

To improve leverage, provide a firmer grip and to reduce effort consider using an auxiliary handle part way down the shaft of the hand tool. These are available in D-shaped and pistol grip shaped handles. Alternatively, a forearm crutch can be adapted for use as a garden tool. A shovel head, for example, can be added to the bottom of the crutch which provides a stable grip and forearm support.

Angled handles on small hand tools relieve strain on the wrist by maintaining the wrist in a neutral position during use. Some also have an arm support attached to the tool. This may decrease the level of wrist and grip strength needed during use.

Thicker handles and grips can make tools easier to hold, particularly if people have weak or limited grasp. Simple ways to increase the handle circumference of existing tools are to wrap foam tubing, bicycle grips, bandage or tennis racquet tape around the handle.



Secateurs

There are battery operated pruning shears that are activated by a trigger positioned on the bottom side of the shears. Pruners and secateurs with a ratchet mechanism may be easier to use by people with limited grip strength. Ratchet secateurs cut in stages rather than requiring a continuous grip force to complete the cut. There are also pruners where the lower handle rotates with the fingers as it is squeezed, reducing friction on the skin.

Contact ILC Tas for more information



Ring **1300 885 886** to speak to a health professional

Visit our website www.ilctas.asn.au or email us ilc@ilctas.asn.au

Make an appointment to visit our centre at 275 Wellington Street, South Launceston

Ring us to find out when we will be visiting your area

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