

Chatting with The Good Dr. Laura Shook

Spread out before me is a wonderful selection of gardening catalogs. Seeds of Change, Totally Tomatoes, Burpees, Park Seeds, Pepper Joes, Territorial, R. H Shumway, Gardner's Supply and Charlie's Greenhouse all call to me and tease my imagination with visions of the garden to come. This is my favorite season for gardening. Free of bugs and weeds, my garden - the garden I see within my mind - is neat, tidy and all the plants are loaded with flowers and fruit. In this dream the drip irrigation is running smoothly and the bunnies who dine leave plenty behind.

Just today I ordered my tomato seeds. Soon they will be planted and we will watch eagerly for the first hint of green pushing through the soil. Eventually the time will come for the seedlings to be planted, watered, mulched and weeded. This is where the fantasy fades and achy knees, sore hips and painful shoulders begin their annual serenade.

Working in the garden is some of the finest exercise you can get. Digging, raking, carrying, lifting, reaching and stooping can be better than a gym membership. Not only do your muscles and joints become strong and flexible but your mind and body are nourished by the flowers and fruits of your labor.

I have promised myself that this year I will warm up and stretch before starting my garden workout. I will alternate my tasks and reduce the chance of repetitive strain to my muscles and joints. I will remember that an icepack applied (for 20 minutes or until the body part being iced goes numb) to an owie or boobo can greatly reduce pain and inflammation that might, left unattended, make an injury worse. And lastly I promise that, when I do over do it, I will call my chiropractor for treatment. Yes the chiropractor has a chiropractor. There are places I can not reach on myself and it is frequently those very places that cause me the greatest distress. That knot under my shoulder blade, that ache in my low back, when I have been undone by the laws of physics and the forces of gravity I call a professional.

This is where I like to recommend one of my favorite books about gardening fitness, *Gardener's Fitness, Weeding Out Aches and Pains* by Barbara Pearlman. I was really bummed to discover that it may be out of print. However, amazon.com had 46 new and used copies available starting at 1 cent. So if you're looking for some additional suggestions for keeping your body mobile this coming spring, there is a bargain to be had.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You probably already know this but it is worth mentioning. IF you are experiencing crushing chest pain, have fallen and can not get up, are gushing blood or can see a bone sticking out - call 911- seek immediate medical care.

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