

March 4, 2020



Safe and Sane Gardening Until You're 90
By Jan Keahey
UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

Do you love to garden? Do you want to garden for many years to come? If so, you're like many other people in the country. People garden for the enjoyment of creating beauty, for raising one's own food and for the physical fitness it offers. People are gardening into their late 90s, albeit it on a smaller scale, but still enjoying the joys of gardening. The trick is not to injure yourself so you don't have to take time off from a pastime you enjoy. There are many ways you can protect yourself.

For instance, try to avoid prolonged repetitive motion by taking a break every 15 minutes or so. You'll also want to protect your body in various ways depending on the task at hand. Impact-resistant goggles should be worn when needed to protect your eyes. When using loud equipment, hearing protection should be worn also. Look for devices such as ear plugs with a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) of 25 or greater. The NRR will be indicated on the package. Masks should be worn when working with anything that could pose a threat to the lungs. Disposable masks are available at all hardware stores. Look for masks with an N95 rating.

Think about your attire also. Do you need a sun hat today or maybe a hard hat to protect your head from falling objects? If you'll be working with chemicals or equipment, long sleeve shirts, long pants, and closed-toed shoes should be worn. And in any area with uneven terrain, wearing supportive shoes is a good idea to protect your feet and ankles. Don't forget a good pair of gardening gloves.

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When using tools, choose the right tool for the task and make sure it is in good operating order and sharp. Check to make sure cords on electric tools are in good condition and, if using an extension cord, ensure that it's the right gauge for the tool. If you have any doubt about your ability to handle a powerful tool, call a professional.

If you're planning on using chemicals, be sure to follow the directions on the label. Wear goggles and gloves that are impervious to chemicals, such as ones coated in Nitrile, a synthetic rubber compound. Always store your chemicals in the original container and keep them out of the reach of children. And don't overuse chemicals. If it was safe to use more than indicated on the label, the chemical companies would recommend so since they want to sell more of the product.

We're very lucky to be gardening at this point in merchandising history because there are so many props and ergonomic tools available to help senior gardeners. Spend some time checking them out at your favorite garden center or in a favorite gardening catalogue.

For more information on these topics, join the Master Gardeners for a free class: "So You Want to Garden Until You're 90—Safe and Sane Gardening", on Wednesday, March 11, from 9:00 to noon at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive in Cameron Park.

Saturday, March 7th, is a First Saturday Public Tour and Solar Viewing at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden. An experienced Master Gardener conducts a free Garden group tour at 9:00am for individuals, family, and friends. There are 16 separate demonstration gardens ranging from the Shade Garden to the Rock Garden and everything in between! From 10am-noon, observe the sun safely through two types of solar telescopes. The Community Observatory, which is adjacent to the Garden, will set up their Hydrogen-Alpha telescopes that allow us to safely view sun spots, solar flares, filaments, and solar prominences. All events at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden and the Community Observatory are free. In the demonstration garden, you can join the 9:00am tour or just stroll through the open gardens on your own. Fun for everyone! 9am-noon. \$2 parking fee. Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512, or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a group tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners/Newsletters_and_Event_Updates/ Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.