



Landscaping Back Injury Prevention

A 5-Minute Safety Training Aid

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Landscaping offers a rewarding career for those who love plants and enjoy working outdoors, but it comes with many physical demands. Understanding how to protect your back is crucial for your long-term health and career in this industry.



Stretch & Warm-up

A pre-work stretching routine can warm up muscles and prepare the body for the physical activity of landscaping. Stretching increases flexibility and blood flow to the muscles. It also reduces the risk of strains and injuries. Continue to take periodic breaks to stretch during the day, especially focusing on the back.



Lifting Techniques

When lifting heavy objects such as fertilizer and mulch bags:

- Keep the load close to your body.
- Bend at the knees, not the waist.
- Tighten your core muscles.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Avoid twisting while lifting.

For very heavy items such as large flower pots or bags of gravel:

- Get assistance from coworkers for team lifts.
- Use mechanical aids like dollies or wheelbarrows. When using wheelbarrows:
 - Load material toward the front, using the wheel as a pivot point.

- Keep the load balanced and avoid overloading.
- Face your hips directly in front of the wheelbarrow handles and lift with your legs, not your back.
- Use your whole body for leverage when dumping, not just arms and shoulders.

For extremely heavy objects like large rocks or pallets of sod:

- Use power equipment such as forklifts or skid steer loaders.



Use hand tools safely

When using hand tools such as shovels and rakes:

- Use your legs and arms, not your back, to push, pull, or lift.
- Pay attention to your posture, particularly when bending forward for extended periods.
- Keep your back straight and bend at the knees.
- Change which side of your body you use every 15-30 minutes to avoid overuse.

Use [ergonomic tools](#) designed to reduce strain.



Additional safety tips

- Stay hydrated to prevent fatigue.
- Use kneeling pads when working close to the ground.
- Alternate between tasks to avoid repetitive motions.
- Assign employees to work in teams, especially in isolated areas.



Training and controls

Employers can further protect workers by providing safety training in a language all employees understand:

- Use a "Tell, Show, Do" method for teaching safe practices.
- Schedule physically demanding work for cooler times of the day.
- Enforce proper tool usage and maintenance.
- Schedule training for all new hires and annually thereafter.

By consistently applying these safety practices and proper body mechanics, landscapers can reduce their risk of back injuries. These tips can not only protect workers' health but ensure a long-term career in this physically demanding field.



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