

Gardening Benefits More Than Your Taste Buds

April 20 2022 9:21 AM



ALTON - [Earth Day 2022](#) marks the perfect time to pledge to improve yourself and the world around you. A low-impact [workout through gardening](#) accomplishes both.



Kelly Bogowith, a physical therapist at [OSF HealthCare in Alton, Illinois](#), says planting roots – literally – is the jump start many need after being cooped up all winter. And she has no problem rattling off examples.

"Using a wheelbarrow, kneeling down to garden, getting back up, carrying bags of soil, shoveling – all of those things are actually great forms of exercise and very enjoyable for many people," she says.

There are many benefits, too. Reaching for flowers promotes flexibility. Hauling that wheelbarrow or lifting a dirt-filled shovel builds muscles and endurance. And being on your hands and knees promotes balance.

"It can be good just getting up and down," Bogowith says. "It's good for our muscles, and improving our leg strength can help with balance, actually. And that transfers to everyday activities."

But like any exercise, you can overdo it. Staying in one position too long can be hard on joints and muscles.

"We have to watch our body mechanics. For example, not hunching over, working for prolonged periods of time," Bogowith says. "Sometimes people might do better kneeling or sitting on a garden caddy. Bending over can be hard on the back and the wrists and the neck and that sort of thing. Taking breaks, standing up and stretching, doing different types of activities."

Bogowith also advises you to garden with someone so you have help, for example, carrying that big bag of soil. She also notes gardening is not a "one day and you're done" activity. Rather, you'll be spreading your physical efforts out over several weeks.