Yard Work: A Time to Work Safely

According to the National Gardening Association, two out of three American households take part in some gardening activity each year. These activities vary regionally but include: raking leaves, transplanting trees and shrubs, planting spring-flowering bulbs and perennials, removing dead branches from trees, controlling troublesome weeds, and lawn mowing.

Many of us will work physically harder in our lawns and gardens than we will during our normal work week. We will also handle a lot of equipment that has the potential to do more bodily harm than most of the things we handle in our day-to-day work.

It should come as no surprise then that the Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that 400,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year for injuries from lawn & garden tools.

This painful trend obviously needs to be stopped. This newsletter will focus on some of the problems associated with doing yard work and using outdoor equipment, and some of the things we can do to keep ourselves and our loved ones from being injured.

Personal Protective Equipment

PPE is not just for factories. Following are examples of some of the PPE we should use while doing yard work, and why we should use them.

- **Gloves** can protect your hands against everything from blisters while raking leaves to cuts from handling sharp lawn mower blades.
- **Long Pants & Long Sleeves** can guard your skin from flying debris thrown by mowers, blowers, saws and weed trimmers.
- **Safety Glasses** should always be worn when using any outdoor power equipment.
- **Ear Protection** is essential when using lawn mowers, weed trimmers, leaf blowers and chain saws.
- **Safety Shoes** should be worn whenever handling heavy objects like stones, bricks, blocks, or firewood.

In This Issue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yard Work: A Time to Work Safely</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over Exposure to the Sun</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Fuels</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Physically Prepared to Tackle the Job</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Equipment Safety Tips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special points of interest:

- Use PPE at all times.
- Don’t overextend or overexert yourself.
- Be extremely careful when handling fuels.
- Outdoor power equipment can be very dangerous. Use caution at all times.
- Be alert for children and pets in the area when using power equipment.
Over Exposure To The Sun

Over exposure to the sun’s damaging rays can cause problems ranging from sunburn to skin cancer. Limit the time you spend working in direct sunlight by doing yard work during early-morning or late afternoon hours. Try to avoid the 10 am-2 pm time period when the sun’s rays are strongest. Protect your skin by wearing long sleeved shirts, pants instead of shorts, and wide brimmed hats. When skin is exposed, apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Heat stress can also be a risk; thus drink plenty of water while working to keep from dehydrating. Remember to take frequent breaks by relaxing in the shade or going indoors and resting in front of a fan.

Handling Fuels

- Gasoline, oil, and other fuels used in yard work are very flammable.
- Never put fuel into a hot or running machine. Shut it down and do something else for a while until it cools down.
- Use OSHA approved containers for storing and transporting fuels. Also, store fuels out of the reach of kids and pets.
- Never smoke while handling fuels.
- Always place fuel cans on the ground when filling. This will drain off static electricity which can build up and spark.

Be Physically Ready to Tackle the Job

Yard work can often be physically demanding. Cumulative injuries, such as tendinitous or tennis elbow, often occur when people overextend themselves on a job they only tackle once or twice a year. Stretching and warming up your muscles before working can help prevent injuries caused by overextension. For overwhelming tasks, enlist help from family members, take frequent breaks, stretch the job out across several days or hire professional help. Even pulling weeds can be painful if you’re not prepared. To prevent strains and sprains, consider the following:

- Keep your back erect when working at ground level and when using long-handled tools, such as spades & rakes.

“Stretching and warming up your muscles before working can help prevent injuries caused by overextension.”

Outdoor Equipment Safety Tips

- Make sure all tools and power equipment are in good, safe working condition.
- Know how to operate equipment. Read the manual and follow all instructions.
- Use the right equipment for the job. Don’t climb a tree to cut a branch if you can use a pole pruner to do the job from the ground.
- Before starting up moving machinery, remove objects from area that could cause injury or damage to equipment, such as sticks, metal, stones and glass.
- NEVER let a child ride on or operate a garden tractor or riding mower.
- Keep small children indoors and supervised when outdoor power equipment is being used.
- Make sure all safety devices are in place.
- Do not point leaf blowers in the direction of people.
- Do not use electrical power equipment in wet areas.
  - Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
  - Never work on equipment while it is running.
  - Turn off all power tools when unattended.