



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



GARDENING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AN UPPER LIMB INJURY

This information booklet is based on our experience of working with patients in Horticultural Therapy sessions who have:

Weak grip, reduced control of large muscle movements, reduced control of movements in hands/fingers, reduced hand-eye co-ordination, upper limb pain, altered sensation, need to complete activities one-handed.

It includes information on how different gardening activities may be beneficial therapeutically and practical advice on how to make gardening tasks easier.



Therapeutic
Benefits of
Seasonal
Horticultural Tasks

GARDENING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AN UPPER LIMB INJURY



Gardening for lower limb booklet.

Therapeutic gardening activities

Using natural materials to adjust to challenging sensations

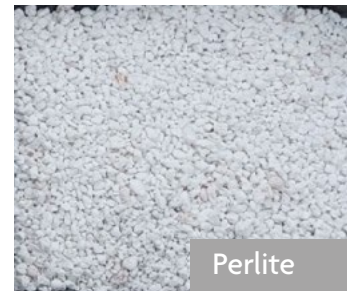
The garden provides a wide range of stimuli to check tolerance to different textures and temperatures e.g., compost, other growing mediums such as perlite, horticultural grit, vermiculite, coir, and different plant textures. This can be a way of assessing and treating hypersensitivity due to abnormal pain processing.



Compost



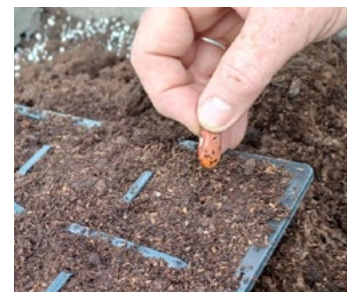
Gravel



Perlite

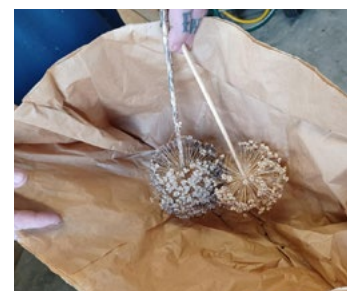
Seed Sowing

Seed size may make this task easier or more challenging. For example, Broad beans are larger so easier to hold. Brassicas such as Cauliflower and Broccoli are very fine seeds so may be more difficult to sow. Peas and Sweet peas are a medium size seed. Progressing between different size seed can be a way of altering the level of difficulty and grading this activity.



Seed Saving

Type of seed and method of saving can also influence level of difficulty. Tomato seeds, for example, are small and need to be washed and laid out individually with fingers or tweezers before drying, requiring dexterity. However, legumes such as beans and peas are larger and can be left in the pods to dry before opening to remove. Alliums and Poppies can be stored upside down in a paper bag and shaken for the seed to fall out.



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



Bulb, Corm and Tuber planting

Again these come in a variety of sizes which may be a way of grading the activity and a consideration if these are easier to handle than seeds. Bulbs are also suited to planting in containers which may be easier to reach and access than working at ground level.

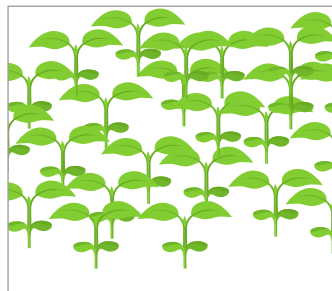


Pricking out and thinning out seedlings

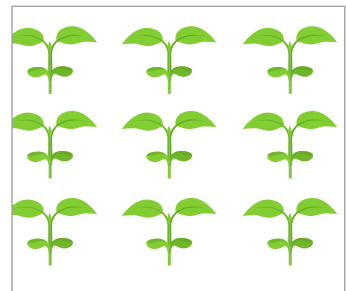
This is working primarily on pinch grip, but the level of difficulty may vary depending on the type of plant, size of stem and volume of seedlings. Pumpkin/Squash seedlings tend to be bigger before requiring pricking out making them easier to handle than say, Broccoli seedlings. Some seedlings can be pricked out in clumps particularly bedding plants which again may be easier to handle than individual seedlings.



For seeds which have been direct sown some seedlings will need to be removed to provide more space for the remaining seedlings to grow. This is usually done at an earlier stage of growth so seedlings will be relatively small. The type of plant may affect the size of seedling and ease of removal.



Before



After

GARDENING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AN UPPER LIMB INJURY

Taking Cuttings

This requires enough grip strength to hold and use a pair of secateurs to cut plant material before planting individual sections to grow on. Hardwood cuttings tend to be slightly thicker and longer sections which may be easier to grip than softwood or semi-ripe cuttings, but more strength maybe needed to make the cut.



Potting on/Planting Out

As seedlings grow and plants become bigger, they may also become easier to handle so we move from co-ordination of small muscle in our hands and fingers to large muscle movements. Less dexterity but more strength maybe required to handle plants and dig planting holes. Different actions such as extending the wrist and fingers are required to firm in plants.



Pruning/Deadheading

This encompasses a wide range of activities from pruning trees to shrubs to removing faded blooms to encourage repeated flowering. This in turn means a wide range of activities to suit different needs. Larger shrubs/trees will need equipment such as loppers which are bigger and heavier than a single pair of secateurs used to prune roses. We have used this task to encourage working bilaterally for patients who have one sided weakness with support.



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



Weeding

Type and location of weeds may affect how this task needs to be approached. Not all weeds need to be removed by hand. Use a hoe for weeds with shallow roots which can be left on top of the soil to die back reducing the work required to remove them. Weeds with tap roots like Dandelions need the whole root digging out so therefore more upper limb strength is required.



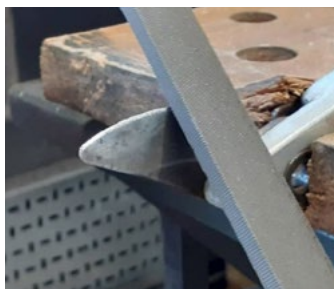
Watering

Use different size watering cans with different amounts of water to adjust the weight, and if possible, use both hands to distribute weight. Consider an outdoor tap or water butt to collect rainwater so that you can fill your watering can outdoors. Use a hose as an alternative and think about one where the handle can be locked into the on position to reduce the need to maintain grip over a prolonged period.



Sharpening Tools

A useful winter activity to work on manual dexterity and prepare pruning tools ready for the jobs ahead in the coming seasons. Taking apart the tool, cleaning the different parts and re-assembling is useful for testing dexterity. Use a vice to secure blades to provide a more stable platform to enable better function.



GARDENING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AN UPPER LIMB INJURY



How to Guides
HighGround

Seasonal Crafts to work on upper limb function

Click on the link (left) for some examples of seasonal crafts.



Adaptive techniques

Pace activities

To avoid flare-ups of pain or fatiguing too quickly intersperse repetitive tasks with short rest breaks or ensure that you take a steadier pace to avoid boom and bust. Use the time to take in and appreciate your surroundings.

Complete tasks in stages

If you have a tray of seedlings to prick out or an area to weed do a bit at a time rather than trying to do it all in one go.

Vary activities

Change and do a different activity which is not using your upper limb in the same way. You can resume the original activity later this may help to manage pain and fatigue.

Work within your reach

Typically at a raised beds or table-top/work bench. This can reduce the demand of reaching higher, lower, or away from you. Be mindful of the width of raised beds too to prevent overreaching, the idea is to easily reach the middle of the bed from both sides, typically at waist height and close to you.



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



Use alternate hands/arms to do the gardening activities.

This way you share the work, reduce fatigue and prevent overuse of one limb.

Use your affected hand/arm to do tasks 2 handed

This might mean guiding or supporting a tool with your affected hand while taking the force of the work through the other.



Consider adjusting the temperature

If you find that cold is a problem for you, you could do gardening activities in a greenhouse, inside or just on warmer days. You could even consider bringing in tools or compost into a warm environment before you use them. Gloves can also be a help if you can tolerate them.

If you find some textures or moving air/water difficult over your skin

It can be helpful to try a glove/long sleeve if you can tolerate it. A fingerless thin glove may be a stepping-stone to resuming tasks without gloves.



What kind of plot?
The no dig plot.
RHS Gardening

No dig/mulching

Consider no dig beds and mulching areas to reduce the need for weeding digging and watering.

Use the palm crease to form a channel to sow smaller seeds

If gripping between thumb and forefinger is difficult.

Mixing small seed with sand

Prior to broadcasting can help to see how evenly it has been distributed.



Seed storage - Seed will keep for a few years if stored correctly so only use what you need to avoid a surplus of plants.

GARDENING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AN UPPER LIMB INJURY



Gardening Tools
for disabled
people
Thrive

Adaptive tools

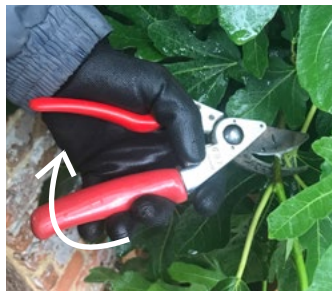
Consider tools which are: lightweight, have a wide/adjustable grip, are long handled, extendable, powered or assist movement.

Try different tools before buying

Lots of companies have a wide range of choices so think about what best suits your needs. E.g., Secateurs – consider weight, width of handles, hand span when open, type of catch to lock and release, assisted movement such as a rotating handle for thumb opposition or ratchet mechanism to cut in stages.



Garden Tools
Peta UK

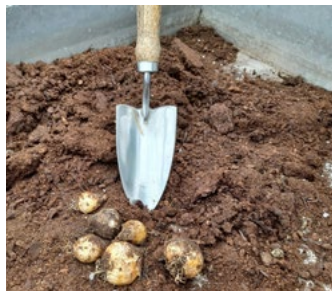


Think about alternative tools for the same job

So if you are planting bulbs and find gripping and using a trowel difficult consider using a bulb planter as an alternative.



Ergonomically
designed garden
tools
Wolf-Garten
Tools



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES

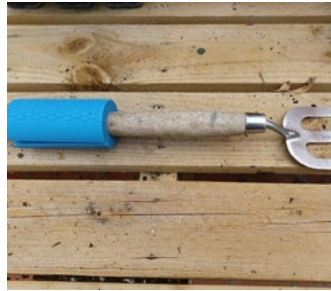


Ergonomic
Handles:
Building &
Gardening
Equipment
iTip

Consider adapting existing tools

By adding a wide grip handle or building up the handle.

We have found grips designed for weight training have been useful for building up handles on hand tools such as trowels and long handled tools such as spades and rakes for patients with reduced grip.



The cutting
edge of
gardening.
Darlac Ltd.

Use a seed dispenser or seed strip

Which may be easier to grip to assist with sowing smaller seeds.



Written by Jane Taylor, Horticultural Therapist at DMRC Stanford Hall.
© HighGround.

Visit our website to find out more: www.highground-uk.org

Become a Friend of HighGround and receive our free newsletter.

