Weeding the Garden Safety Tips

April 11, 2018 By Margaret Martin

I encourage my clients to follow these safety tips for weeding the garden. They are especially appropriate for those individuals with osteoporosis, osteopenia, and low bone density because these individuals are at risk of fracture risk of a [compression fracture](https://melioguide.com/osteoporosis-treatment/treat-compression-fracture/). These guidelines are also applicable to individuals with low back pain, [shoulder](https://melioguide.com/perfect-posture/what-causes-shoulder-blade-pain/) or neck pain, or knee arthritis.

Your weeds did not appear overnight and they do not need to disappear in one day. I recommend you do not do all of your weeding in one day. Break it up into smaller, more manageable periods and spread the effort (and strain) across multiple sessions — I recommend no more than 15 to 20 minutes of weeding during each individual session.

Weeding the Garden: Recommended Tools

Besides your weeding tools, I recommend that you have the following items when you weed your garden:

1. A foam pad for kneeling and
2. A sturdy stick (like a walking stick) to support you when you do the “gardener’s lift” (explained later).

Alternatively, you may want to consider a garden stool such as the one shown here.



Folding Kneeler Stool image source: Lee Valley Tool.

Four Weeding Techniques

Here are four techniques to remove weeds safely and not compromise your back, your knees or your bones. Keep in mind that keeping your posture in good form is very important. Make a point of not losing all of the good progress you have been making with your osteoporosis exercise program.

* Shortstop Squat/Hold — This position is ideal for weeding when you do not have a very strong root system.
* Power Squat — You will need to do this for more demanding, deeper root system in your garden.
* Gardener’s Lift — Based on the golfer’s lift, this one is appreciated by clients with knee problems.
* Kneeling — Very effective when you plan on spending a longer period in one patch. A foam pad to support your knees or a gardener’s bench is welcomed.

Distribute your workout on both sides of your body so that you do not stress one part of your body.

Once you are done the weeds, make sure you sit back and enjoy your garden!

Safely Weeding the Garden

I recommend you break your weeding up into tangible bits. Maybe 20 minutes to half an hour of weeding at a time.

Other than your weeding tools, I recommend that you have a pad that you can kneel on and a strong and sturdy stick that you can use as a support.

Squats and Happy Knees

If you are happy with your [squats](https://melioguide.com/osteoporosis-exercises/aerobic-exercise-for-seniors/) and have happy knees, then by all means squat and save your back. You can also support your back by bringing your forearm down onto your thigh — like the short stop position.

From this position you can do some weeding that’s not aggressive or that is not too demanding.

If you need to tackle a deeper root system, then you are going to have to get two legs behind the item, get in close and use much more of the power pushing up with your legs.

Use a Stick for Support

Consider [hinging from your hip](https://melioguide.com/osteoporosis-exercises/hip-hinge-exercise/), and avoid getting down into deep squats. This is important for people with arthritis in the knees.

Use the stick in the opposite side from the leg that you’re going to be leveraging off of. Hold the stick far enough apart that you feel stable, so that when you go up, you can continually just offset the bend and use the weight from the opposite hand.

If you’re doing this and you’re moving along the garden and you’re coming down and working through different areas, I would encourage you to do half of it with the leverage off of the right foot, and then certainly switch part way through, and do half of it with the leverage off of the left foot.

Keep Your Balance

Good [balance](https://melioguide.com/products/balance-training-exercises/) is important through your weeding session.

Consider Sitting

Instead of getting on your knees, consider sitting on a low stool. That allows you to spend time in through this whole area, or your whole area of garden that you have to work through.

This well covers whether you’re doing a short stop hold, the hip hinge or golfer’s lift, or coming down and working in a better [ergonomic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_factors_and_ergonomics) position.

Keep in mind to save your back that you can balance the weeding from the right arm and left arm. This provides an even workout through your body.

Finally, remember to break it up even through the day or even better through the week.

The Spinal Stretch Exercise

For those of you who have had posterior disc bulge or wish to avoid one, forward work should be sandwiched in between back extensions. A gentle back extension is a spinal stretch.

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