



Spring Has Sprung: Safety Tips for Gardening and Landscaping

Eager to exercise your green thumb?

Each Spring sends homeowners scurrying to collect the materials needed to create a perfectly manicured lawn and garden.

In the rush to beautify your landscape, don't forget the importance of safety. Never underestimate the potential hazards of handling and using machinery, tools, pesticides and fertilizers. Some important tips for keeping you and your family safe:

- **Don't take on more than you can handle.**

Be careful to avoid fatigue and heat stress. Avoid sudden or sustained periods of activity, take periodic breaks and drink plenty of water.

- **Lift properly.**

Keep your back straight, bend your knees and lift with your legs. Get help when moving or lifting heavy objects like mulch, soil, large shrubs, trees and firewood.

- **Use the right tools and keep them properly maintained.**

Store your lawn and garden tools in a safe area. Inspect tools before each use - don't use if damaged. Read the equipment owner's manuals and operate them according to instructions and only for the job they were engineered to do. Unplug all power tools when not in use, even if they are in the "off" position. Don't leave tools unattended or allow children or inexperienced adults to operate them. Before using any equipment, inspect the area in which it will be used and remove objects that could potentially damage people, equipment or property.

- **Wear the appropriate gear.**

- o **Shoes and gloves:** Wear shoes that protect your entire foot. The safest have a non-skid sole and safety toe. Protect your hands from cuts, splinters and burns by using gloves - wear the correct pair for the type of work being done. Rubber boots and gloves offer the most protection when applying chemicals.

- o **Ear, eye, and lung/nasal protection:** To prevent hearing damage, use ear protection such as earplugs while operating a mower, blower or other noisy equipment. Safety goggles can protect eyes from a number of hazards - always wear them when mowing, blowing, weed whacking, pruning or other tasks that can cause flying debris. Protect lungs and nasal passages by wearing a dust mask. Ask your local home-improvement store about specialty masks to use when applying garden chemicals.

- **Play it safe around electricity and gas.**

Equip all outdoor electrical outlets with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). If using extension electrical cords, make sure they are UL-approved for the required power and outdoor use. Never use electrical equipment - including electric mowers, edgers or trimmers - on wet/damp grass or shrubbery or in the rain. If using machinery fueled by gas, store gas in an approved container. Fill gas outside using a funnel to prevent spills - never fill while equipment is operating or hot.



- **Use pesticides and fertilizers with caution.**

Store chemicals in their original containers and locked in cabinets away from children and pets. Always read the label and follow directions regarding proper use, suggested personal protective equipment, proper and safe method of disposal and if exposed, appropriate first-aid treatment. Wear long sleeves, long pants, rubber gloves and boots, and eye protection when mixing and applying chemicals. When finished dusting or spraying, wash hands and clothes and rinse rubber gloves and boots to eliminate any chemical residue.

- **Wash your hands.**

After completing any garden or lawn project, wash your hands.

For additional information:

National Safety Council, www.nsc.org

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