

Stay safe while outdoors

Prevent lawn and garden related injuries

A day spent working in the yard is an ideal way to pass the time on spring and summer afternoons. A pristine landscape can add value to a property and instill pride in homeowners who put a lot of thought and effort into their lawns and gardens.

A sun-soaked day can make it easy to overlook potential threats when working in a lawn or garden. But safety precautions are of the utmost necessity when working in the yard, where the risk for serious injury is considerable. For example, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons reports that, in 2016, more than 90,000 patients, including nearly 5,000 children, were treated in hospital emergency rooms for lawn mower-related injuries.

Lawn and garden related injuries can be prevented without going to great lengths.

- Know your terrain before mowing. Knowing the terrain in

your own yard can reduce the risk for accident or injury. This can be especially important when mowing the lawn with a riding mower. Adhere to manufacturers' recommendations regarding inclines to reduce tip-over accidents that can pin riders beneath the mower. Study hilly areas of the yard prior to mowing so you know which areas are safe to mow with a riding mower and which areas are best mowed with a walk-behind mower.

For greater control when using a walk-behind mower on an incline, mow parallel to the slope.

- Apply and reapply sunscreen. Sunburns may not require trips to the emergency room, but they can still be serious. In fact, the Skin Cancer Foundation (SCF) notes that sunburn is a leading cause in the majority of cases of basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, which is the deadliest form of skin cancer. The

SCF recommends applying sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside to allow the sunscreen to bond to your skin. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours and more often if you're sweating excessively.

The SCF recommends broad spectrum sunscreens, which protect the skin from both UVA and UVB rays. Though a product with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 is acceptable when walking the dog or driving to work, the SCF advises using a product with an SPF of 30 or higher when engaging in extended outdoor activities like gardening or mowing.

- Employ the buddy system. Use the buddy system when pruning tall trees or performing any tasks that require a ladder. The Orthopedic Institute of Pennsylvania (OIP) reports that more than 164,000 people are injured each year falling off a ladder.



Ask a significant other or neighbor to hold the ladder in place while you climb up to reduce your risk of falling.

If cutting large branches, cut them piecemeal to reduce the risk of being injured by heavy falling branches.

- Inspect the property for insect hives. The OIP notes that the most common insect stings in spring come from bees, wasps and hornets.

Homeowners who are not careful can inadvertently come across hives when doing spring cleanup, making them vulnerable to bites and stings. That can be very dangerous for anyone and especially so for people with a history of allergic reactions to insect bites or stings. Inspect areas where you'll be working to make sure insects haven't put down roots in your property. If you discover any hives and are hesitant to remove them on your own, contact a local landscaping firm.

Lawn and garden accidents and injuries can be serious. Thankfully, accidents and injuries are easily prevented when homeowners take a few simple safety precautions while tending to their lawns and gardens.

Getting to know succulents

Succulents can be just what indoor or outdoor gardens need. Even though succulents are becoming more popular, there are still some people who are unaware of their attributes. By learning more about succulents, people may become devotees of these unique plants.

The word "succulent" brings to mind juicy, savory foods. But succulents aren't meant to be consumed. In fact, they get their mouth-watering name from their uncanny ability to store water in fleshy stems or leaves. That means they do not require frequent watering like other plants might.

Succulents also may prove more durable in the face of drought and are a handy plant for forgetful gardeners or those who travel often

and want something more hands-off in their gardens.

According to the succulents resource Succulents and Sunshine, most succulents prefer warm temperatures and are not very cold-tolerant. However, there are some varieties that can survive freezing temperatures. Still, for most succulents, it's best if they are kept in warm, moderately sunny conditions. The DIY Network says succulents grow best in bright light, but not always in full, hot sun.

Succulents also may attract gardeners thanks to their diverse looks. Better Homes and Gardens says that color variations of succulents are quite varied and include green, yellow, burgundy, white, blue-green, pink, red and variegated combinations. Their shapes can

be just as diverse, with many having pointy, rounded, spiky or ruffled leaves.

People may be particularly familiar with one type of succulent: cacti. These traditional desert-dwellers are prized for their water-retention abilities, but some seem downright scary with their prickly exteriors. While all cacti are succulents, it's important to note that not all succulents are cacti. Less needle-like succulents include aloe, jade, snake plant and agave. Hens and chicks (*semper-vivum*) and wax plant (*hoya*) are other succulents to consider.

Searching for succulents online is another great way for gardeners to discover these wonderful plants.



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