

Adaptive gardening tools for older people



This is LiveUp's full guide to helpful gardening tools. These items can make gardening easier and more enjoyable for older adults.

This comprehensive guide is for older adults who want to reduce strain and pain from gardening.

The tools in this list are grouped into 5 categories based on the challenges they help with:

- Bending and kneeling
- Reaching
- Pushing and carrying
- Hand pain
- Organisation and safety

With the right tools, gardening can stay enjoyable and safe – even if bending, lifting, or gripping feels harder than it used to.

OT-recommended garden tools

Our occupational therapists (OTs) have curated this list of garden tools ideal for older adults. OTs are experts in finding practical solutions that help older people keep doing the things they love.

These tools can make gardening easier and more enjoyable, so you can stay active outdoors.

LiveUp is a non-profit funded by the Health Department, so we don't earn money from these suggestions. We're not connected to any retailers or products in any way.

Our goal is to help you find practical, cost-effective solutions that make everyday life easier.

Tools to reduce pain from bending and kneeling

- **Garden kneelers or pads**

Cushioned pads can reduce pressure on your knees and provide comfort while kneeling. Some [garden kneelers](#) also have handles to assist in getting up from the ground.



- **Garden seats and stools**

Garden seats allow you to sit while you work in the garden, giving your knees and back a break. A directors aluminium folding chair can also be suitable for soft ground.

- **Raised garden beds and vertical planters**

Vertical or [raised garden beds](#) can bring your plants up to a convenient height for you. Men's Sheds can sometimes help build raised garden beds. You'll need to give them the materials and instructions and donate towards their shed.



- **Retractable hanging planters**

Hanging planters reduce the need to bend down to reach pots on the ground. For added convenience, consider using a retractable plant hook to hang your planters. This eliminates the need to stretch or climb to reach high baskets. Simply pull or push the plant hook pulley to adjust the basket to your ideal level.

Tools for reaching tough spots



- **All-purpose pick-up tools**

You can use an [easy reacher](#) to pick up small items like pots, seedling punnets, or garden debris – without bending down.



- **Mid-length gardening tools**

Easily reach into lower garden beds while sitting. You can also use these to work in raised garden beds while standing.



- **Long-handled gardening tools**

[Long-handled tools](#) help you reach the ground for tasks like weeding or pruning while standing, and reduce stooping.



- **Fruit pickers**

Reduce ladder use and overreaching when picking fruit. Simply capture fruit in the basket at the top end of a long stick.



- **Watering wands**

Watering wands help you water difficult-to-reach spots with a gentle spray.

Tools for pushing and carrying

- **Garden trolleys**

Garden trolleys or [outdoor carts](#) can help you move tools, soil, and pots without heavy lifting.



- **Flowerpot trolleys**

A pot trolley sits underneath your pot, so you can move the pot around on the wheels attached to its base. This way you can shift heavy pots and plants easily, without lifting.

- **Sack trucks or hand trolleys**

Use these to move heavy bags of soil around your garden with ease.



- **Dump carts**

Dump carts are designed to help you move piles of soil or mulch. They have a built-in tipping mechanism to safely unload heavy materials.

- **Portable ramps**

A portable or folding ramp is useful for moving trolleys, carts, and wheelbarrows over outdoor steps.



Reducing hand strain

You can protect your hands and make gardening easier by using the right tools.

Garden tools with built-up handles reduce the need for a tight grip. You DIY or buy built-up handles to add on to your existing tools.

Also consider:

- **Ratchet pruners**

Ratchet pruners are ideal if your grip is weak. They're easy to squeeze but still give strong cutting power.



- **Light, ergonomic hand tools**

Choose lightweight, ergonomic tools, like [adaptive trowels](#) and [easy-grip secateurs](#). They help reduce wrist and hand strain.

- **Left-handed or small-hand pruners**

If you're left-handed or often find tools to be uncomfortably large for your hands, look for alternatives that suit you. Buy the tool that fits you best.



Bonus tips for reducing hand pain:

Hold tools in your hand before you buy, to see how they feel.

By shopping around, you can find the tools that suit you best.

You can also reduce hand pain from arthritis by strengthening your hands with movement. Consider using:

- [Gentle hand exercises](#)
- [Homemade hand therapy dough](#)

Staying organised and safe

- **Self-watering pots or irrigation systems**

You can save time and effort with automatic watering systems.



- **Brightly coloured tools**

Make it easier to find your tools when gardening by buying ones that are easy to see. If you want to make plain tools stand out more, you can wrap high-vis tape around their handles.

- **Gardening aprons**

Make it easier to reach your tools while you work. You can keep your most-used hand tools with you in your apron pocket.



- **Plant tags and journals**

Keeping physical notes on your garden helps with memory and organisation. It also means someone else can help with garden duties more easily when you want a break.

- **Shadow board or tool hanger**

Make it easy to sort and store your hand tools and small gardening items. Shadow boards or hangers make it easier to see what you have and what's missing.



- **Lightweight buckets and two-wheeled wheelbarrows**

You can use [buckets](#) and [wheelbarrows](#) to keep all your tools together with you while you work. This helps you remember where they are. It also saves on unnecessary trips to and from the tool shed. Look for lightweight buckets with comfortable handles. Wheelbarrows with two wheels are easier to handle than single-wheeled ones.



- **Self-winding hose reel**

Reduce your risk of tripping on a garden hose left on the ground with a self-winding retractable hose reel.



- **Protective gear**

Gardening gloves, safety glasses, sun protection, and closed-in shoes help protect you from injury when gardening.

Want the short version? You can download and print our list of [10 helpful gardening tools](#) for a quick reference.

Preparing your body for gardening

Here are some ways you can avoid injuries while gardening:

- Stay hydrated and sun safe.
- Keep a water bottle and chair nearby for regular breaks.
- [Warm up and stretch](#) before you start.
- Alternate tasks to avoid repetitive strain. Mix gardening jobs that require bending with standing tasks, to avoid getting stiff.
- Wear supportive shoes to prevent falls and protect your feet.
- Do a little bit of gardening often, rather than a lot all at once. This is less taxing on your muscles.

Adapting your garden

Some simple changes can reduce effort and risk in the garden. For example, you could:

- Replace plants that need lots of water with easy-care varieties, like succulents and shrubs.
- Choose low-maintenance native plants for your garden.
- Use automatic watering systems.
- Consider a robotic mower for large lawns.

Indoor gardening

If outdoor gardening becomes too difficult, research has shown that keeping indoor pot plants can be good for your health, too.

Here are some of the health benefits of houseplants:

- Improving indoor air quality
- Reducing stress and anxiety
- Lifting your mood and energy
- Improving your recovery from illness, injury, or surgery

Getting support

An occupational therapist (OT) can help you:

- Adapt tasks to stay independent
- Simplify your work in the garden
- Find products that make it easier for you to maintain your garden
- Protect your joints and manage any pain you might experience

Find an OT near you through [Occupational Therapy Australia](#) (OTA).

Can't find an OT in your area through OTA? You can also check Healthdirect's tool for [finding an OT by location](#).

If you need more information about healthy ageing, take the LiveUp quiz or get in touch with one of our helpful team members on **1800 951 971**.

CONTACT US

Website: liveup.org.au

Email: support@liveup.org.au

Phone: 1800 951 971

Facebook: facebook.com/LiveUpAus

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