



MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

THINKING SAFE AND GREEN



AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

#9

SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES

Information given here is intended for use by program representatives, master gardeners, and those they train.



More than 1,000,000 back injuries occur in the workplace each year. Approximately 800,000 of these injuries are to the lower back and 750,000 happen while lifting objects. **English and Spanish language safety videos on preventing back injuries are also available for loan from the ANR Environmental Health & Safety Library at: <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Recommended Safe Lifting Practices

- Prior to lifting, determine the weight of the load by pushing on the object.
- If you determine the weight to be large, reduce the load by splitting it in half or more.
- Do not try to lift objects beyond your capability. If you have to strain to lift or carry a load, then it is too heavy for you.
- If the weight of a load is beyond your capability, find someone to assist you with lifting the load or use a forklift, dolly, or hand truck to move the load.
- Before lifting a package, make sure the contents are secure and the weight is balanced so that the contents will not shift when moved.
- Stand close to the load with your feet slightly staggered and spread apart to about shoulder width.
- While maintaining a straight back, squat by bending your knees.
- Firmly grasp the object and begin slowly lifting with your legs.
- Do not twist your body while lifting at a controlled speed. Keep the object's center of gravity as close to your body as possible.
- Carry the load between the shoulder and waist.
- If required to turn while carrying the load, turn with the feet and not with the trunk of the body.
- Do not walk on slippery or uneven surfaces while carrying a load.
- To set a load down, lower yourself at a controlled speed by bending your knees while maintaining a straight back.
- Take frequent breaks when you are lifting and carrying many loads. Do not overtire yourself.
- Studies conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) concluded there was insufficient evidence to recommend the use of back belts to prevent back injuries.