



## Down and Dirty: Gardening for everyone

The effort required to maintain a garden can be reduced by incorporating energy saving techniques, appropriate equipment and good design principles.

### Garden Design

Adapting the garden environment will make it more manageable overall. Minimise the size and number of high maintenance garden beds and avoid plants that require considerable care. Weeding can be reduced with ground covers or thickly planted perennials, mulching or by using chemical control. Raised garden beds, large pots and urns reduce the need for bending. Terracing steep slopes to create flat areas can make gardening and mowing somewhat easier. Paved or hard surfaces can be an attractive alternative to lawn areas. Automatic watering systems conserve the physical energy used when hosing and can provide better water efficiency.

### Kneelers & Stools

Garden kneelers with handles at the sides assist the gardener to kneel down and stand up. Many kneelers can be reversed to form a low stool. Low stools are useful whilst completing gardening tasks within low garden beds, particularly if kneeling is difficult or painful.



### Hand Tools

Appropriate hand tools reduce effort and help maintain good posture. To minimise muscle fatigue and strain, look for lightweight tools and ratchet mechanisms that reduce the operating force required. Small, sharp tools are often easier to lift and manipulate, also conserving energy. Some tools can be adapted for left handed users, and others adapted for one-handed use with Velcro™.

Long handled tools eliminate the need to bend and reach, and can be used when standing or seated. Long handled tools provide greater leverage and less physical effort. Some tools allow the handle length to be altered to suit individual users and the tool head to be changed between different styles of handles.



Long handled weeders eliminate the need to bend to pull out weeds. The weeder grips the weeds when the tines are engaged and releases them when lifted from the ground.

Picking fruit from high branches is a common difficulty especially for people experiencing balance or mobility difficulties. Fruit pickers are designed to pick and catch fruit. They have telescopic handles and come with a collection bag.

To improve leverage, provide a firmer grip and to reduce effort consider using an auxiliary handle part way down the shaft of the hand tool. These are available in “D” shaped and pistol grip shaped handles. Alternatively, a forearm crutch can be adapted for use as a garden tool. For example, a shovel head added to the bottom of the crutch provides a more stable grip and forearm support.

Angled handles on small hand tools relieve strain on the wrist by maintaining the wrist in a neutral position during use. Some also have an arm support attached to the tool. This may decrease the level of wrist and grip strength needed during use.

Thicker handles and grips can make tools easier to hold, particularly if individuals have weak or limited grasp. Simple ways of increasing handle circumference of existing tools are to add foam tubing, bicycle grips, bandage or tennis racquet tape wrapped around the handle.



## Secateurs



There are battery operated pruning shears that are activated by a trigger positioned on the bottom side of the shears. Pruners and secateurs with a ratchet mechanism may be easier to use for people with limited grip strength. Ratchet secateurs cut in stages rather than requiring a continuous grip force to complete the cut. There are also pruners where the lower handle that rotates with the fingers as it is squeezed, reducing friction on the skin.



## ILC Tas

ILC Tas is an equipment display and advisory service. We have occupational therapists to help you decide what you need. You can contact ILC Tas by telephone, email, fax or mail. You can also make an appointment to come see us at our display centre in Launceston. Please contact us on 1300 885 886 for more details.