

What Has Dr. Shook Been Reading?
Gardener's Fitness, Weeding Out the Aches and Pains.
By Barbara Pearlman
Taylor Publishing 1999

Barbara Pearlman was surprised when taming her overgrown back yard sent her sore and achy body running for her massage therapist. She had, after all, been described by The New York Times as "Manhattan's fitness guru", She was forced to conclude that years of working in the fitness field had left her unprepared for working in the fields. Possessing the strength and lung capacity to bike or jog did not necessarily guarantee her the physical conditioning necessary for the tough and sweaty sport of gardening. Like any sport, gardening would require strength and flexibility combined with good movement technique. And like a proper "Fitness Guru" she wrote a book.

Gardener's Fitness begins with strengthening exercises and warm up stretches for the back, shoulders, legs and hands. Moving into the garden the reader is led through the proper mechanics of bending, lifting, carrying, holding, reaching, pushing, pulling, squatting, kneeling, shoveling, hoeing and raking. Smooth well-paced movements are encouraged to preserve energy as well as protect muscles and joints.

If weeding your garden has left you a twisted, you might consider adopting Guru Pearlman's horticultural mantra "Don't Kvetch. Stop and Stretch." Encouraging the gardener to heed the body's signals indicating stress and strain. To periodically take time out from chores to sit back, admire your work and perform simple stretches to dekind those achy muscles and joints.

This is a book packed with tidy bits of information. Comfortable clothing, good shoes, sun protection, bug bites, allergies and BATHS! Baths to cleans and soften the skin or to sooth aches, itches, bites and burns. When Ms Pearlman finds herself damaged, she looks first to natural remedies and prudent home first aide. She advocates the uses of massage therapists, physical therapists, chiropractors and when necessary medical doctors.

I loved this book. Unlike some fitness books, *Gardener's Fitness* is refreshingly lacking in technical jargon and mumbo-jumbo. Well illustrated stretches and strengthening exercises assist the gardening junkie in gaining and retaining the strength and flexibility required for the bending, stooping, lifting reaching, pushing and pulling necessary to fully experience that down on the earth ... lets grow some plants ... gardening experience.

I will definitely be adding this book to my list of recommended reading.

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