



SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR FARM AND GARDEN

Farming and gardening are fun and satisfying activities. They can increase your family's food security and can have many physical and mental health benefits. However, gardens and farms can be dangerous places. To protect you and your family, here are some essential farming and gardening safety and health tips.

- 1. Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** Wear protective clothing to reduce your chances of harm, sunburn and injuries.
 - Protective clothing includes long sleeves, safety goggles, long pants, a wide-brimmed hat and boots. Tuck your pants into your socks and put high rubber boots over both.
 - Use safety gloves to protect your hands from cuts and skin irritations.
 - If you work around loud machinery or loud noise in general, use hearing protection.
 - Use insect repellent to protect against ticks and insects.
 - Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to protect against sunburn and skin cancer.
 - Use a mask that covers your nose and mouth when working around dust and dirt.
- 2. Consider temperature.** Temperatures and other weather conditions can change drastically from



morning to afternoon. Check the temperature and weather for the day, and then plan your day. Decide how long can you tolerate being outside.

- Try to do your job in the shade.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Leave the workplace if you have any signs of illness, such as a bad headache, dizziness or nausea.
- Always eat healthy food to recover your energy.
- Bring proper rain gear.
- Follow severe weather protocols immediately if the weather turns bad.

- 3. Warm up.** Farming and gardening involve a lot of physical labor. This can be hard on your body. It is important to first warm up and stretch your muscles. This will help prevent injuries.
- 4. Choose tools wisely.** The tools you use can help reduce the amount of stress you put on your body. Choose ergonomic tools that minimize this stress. Keep sharp tools away from children and animals. Keep electrical cords, ropes and hoses out of walkways.
- 5. Focus on your posture.** Chores on a farm often include a lot of bending and kneeling. Heavy jobs can cause injuries if not conducted properly with the right posture. Take the time to ensure you maintain the right posture. You should never feel uncomfortable. Instead of bending over, kneel using knee pads when possible. Avoid “solo” jobs that involve very heavy lifting. When possible, use equipment to do the heavy lifting or have another person help you.
- 6. Drink water often.** Drinking water is critical to your health and productivity. As the days get longer and hotter, you are at increased risk for dehydration.



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- 7. Take a short break.** Farming and gardening are hard work. Remember to take breaks often. As the days get longer and hotter, take more breaks. This will greatly improve your ability to work.
- 8. Use chemicals carefully.** A lot of chemicals and harmful materials are used in farming and gardening. When you choose to use fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, paints, sprays and other chemicals, it is important that you read the labels and ensure that you are using the product correctly and for its intended use. It's just as important to read instructions on how to properly store chemicals, to keep them away from children and animals and prevent them from leaching, which can harm your health and the environment.
- 9. Respond to injuries.** Injuries will occur when you work on a farm or in the garden. Even if the injury is small, tend to it immediately. Always use clean water and clean rags and bandages. If the injury needs to be tended to by a doctor, go immediately to a facility that can see you. Waiting to treat an injury can cause secondary injuries that require more medical attention and more time away from the farm or garden.

For more information, contact Crystal Kyle, Ph.D., NC AgrAbility director and NC Agromedicine Institute coordinator, at cakyle@ncat.edu.

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