



## raking & sweeping

This is the outdoor equivalent of vacuuming, in terms of lower back strain. I suggest you get a little 'Broadway musical' with it! You'd be surprised how useful a little rhythm is in avoiding injury.

- 1. USE** your whole body, not just your arms and back, which can result in twisting your back.
- 2. KEEP** the action loose and fluid. Change hands (sides) to balance out the work on the muscles.

## secateurs

These are largely a matter of trial and error, of seeing how you like the grip, how sore your hands are after using them, and how they perform over time. Things to look out for include: soft grip handles; adjustable handles; mechanisms designed to reduce the amount of force needed; a ratchet blade that holds the stem before a second gentle squeeze cuts it; big handles or small handles, depending on your hand size; and just the way they are weighted, which varies with each person's grip. Here's a few to try.

**Darlac Professional Bypass Pruner Secateurs** (top), \$15.95. Suits a larger hand. Cuts up to 20mm. **Darlac Compact Bypass Pruner Secateurs** (left), \$16.95. Small, neat, non-slip handles, one-handed operation of the catch. Cuts up to 16mm. **Darlac Super Classic Ratchet Bypass Pruner Secateurs** (bottom), \$18.95. Good for weak hands; squeeze, release, then squeeze again. Cuts up to 25mm. [mrfothergills.com.au](http://mrfothergills.com.au). **Fiskars PowerGearX Large Bypass Pruner** (centre), \$59.98. Soft-grip handles that rotate to spread the load across fingers. Cuts up to 26mm. [fiskars.com.au](http://fiskars.com.au). **Felco 14** (right), \$103. Sturdy, compact, ergonomic, good for small hands. Cuts up to 18mm. [felco.com.au](http://felco.com.au)



## A word from Mark about balance...

As we age, our sense of balance can deteriorate. The muscle, bone and joint changes are well understood, but it's also due to our repertoire of movement shrinking. Gardening is a tremendous antidote to this.

But falls happen, and they hurt. Prevention is simpler than you think – it's about conditioning and preparing your body, not just strengthening, but keeping your balance reflexes honed.

Many of my gardening clients (and non-gardening) commit to a daily ritual of stepping. It is a drill not unlike a dancing exercise, and can be as animated as you like, as you get more confident. It's useful to do it for a couple of minutes before venturing into the garden. Here's how.

- Stand on stable ground. Have a support handy if you feel safer.
- Step or march on the spot for one minute. Try to engage the whole body, not just your legs. If you're feeling up to it, after a short rest, break into a Cliff Young-esque jog around the room or yard for another minute.
- Now, as though standing in the centre of a clock face or compass, take small steps in each direction. Eventually, the larger the step, the more strenuous the workout. Try this for another 2–3 minutes, involving the whole body.

That's all there is to it! **GA**

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For a physiotherapist near you, visit [choose.physio/findaphysio](http://choose.physio/findaphysio)