



News Release

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Protect Your Back in the Garden, Elsewhere

As cool weather departs and spring returns to Arizona, landscapers kick into high gear planting, trimming and focusing on spring gardening.

Workers in this profession regularly are called upon to move heavy items, including trees, shrubs, bags of mulch and maintenance equipment. They often are asked to work in hunched positions as they dig, rake, weed, hoe and perform their many tasks.

In the landscaping business, as in all industries, strains and sprains caused by lifting and carrying account for 20 percent of reported back injuries. That also represents nearly 30 percent of all workers' compensation claims.

Proper lifting techniques and avoiding mistakes before and after a lift can help reduce or prevent back injuries.

"Lifting is an action that affects virtually every industry to some degree," said Claudia Baker, Loss Control Manager at [SCF Arizona](#).

"A critical piece of the lifting action that can easily be overlooked is the planning of the lift," she continued. "Injuries can be avoided by assessing what is to be lifted, by whom and to where the lifted item is being carried. By considering these things before the lift is performed, you can minimize or eliminate unnecessary exposure to injuries."

Baker offers these tips.

Lifting Dos:

- Size up the load to determine if you will need help. Slide loads when possible.
- Wear sturdy boots or shoes with nonslip soles.
- Get a firm footing, then part your feet and place one foot slightly in front of the other.
- Keep the load close to your body and directly in front of you.
- Keep your back as straight as possible. Bend your knees and lift with your legs.
- Grip the object well. Use handles, when possible, and make sure gloves fit properly.
- Avoid lifting loads higher than chest level.
- Lift in a smooth, controlled manner. Don't jerk the load or twist your body.
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Lifting Don'ts:

- Curving the back forward while grabbing the object, then lifting by straightening the back
- Keeping the legs straight and bending at the hips to lift the item
- Twisting the back while lifting, holding or carrying the item
- Holding the object away from the body

- Lifting a heavy object above shoulder level
- Lifting an object that is too heavy

For a brochure on proper lifting techniques, go to SCF Arizona's website, scfaz.com, or call 602.631.2809. Policyholders that wish to arrange a meeting with an SCF Loss Control Consultant to discuss lifting issues can call 602.631.2000.

SCF Arizona is the state's largest provider of workers' compensation insurance and a major advocate of workplace safety.