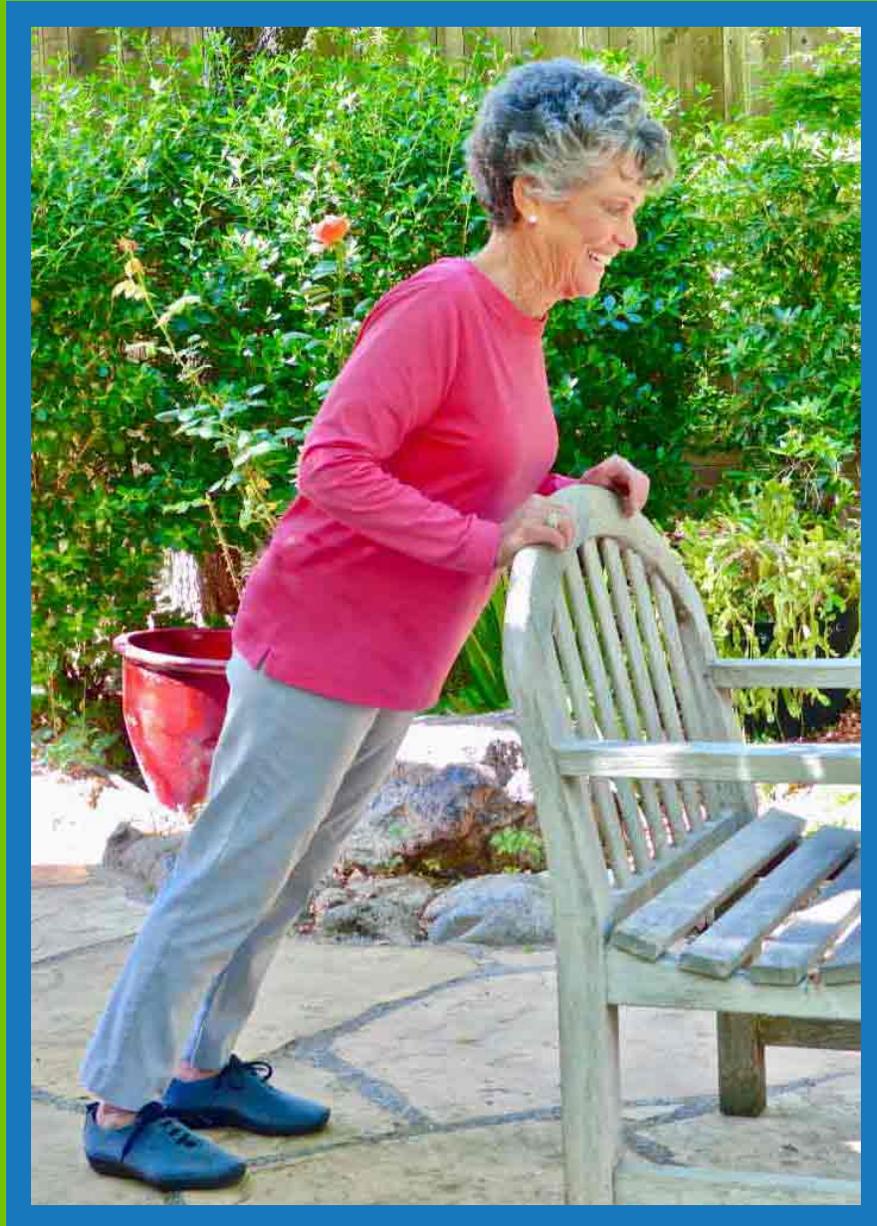


Dynamic Gardening Stretches

Nurture Your Body, Nourish Your Garden



Have a more productive, comfortable, and joyful time in your garden by caring for your body, your most important gardening tool. These exercises will improve your flexibility, core strength, and more.

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Published by
Dynamic Health & Fitness Inc.
www.DynamicVitality.com

Dynamic Health & Fitness, Inc.
450 East Strawberry Drive, #5, Mill Valley, CA 94941

First Edition Publication Date: September, 2019
in *The Lifelong Gardener, Garden with Ease & Joy at Any Age*, by Toni Gattone
Photos courtesy of Heidi Hornberger

Revised, March, 2021
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About Dr. Suki Munsell

Hello. I'm glad you are joining me in these exercises. As a dance, and exercise coach for over 45 years, I've helped people like yourself use exercise to do what they love for longer and with greater vitality.

Like you, I love gardening. I want to garden lifelong for the beauty, delight, and health I experience when connecting to the plant kingdom. When pain robbed my joy and limited my gardening time, I began stretching and strengthening my body with exercises like those you'll find in this book.

Now I can garden longer without pain, lift heavier loads, bend and squat as needed. Arthritis is gone from my hands and while my back eventually tires, it no longer hurts. Of course, I have to be sensible and listen for my limits. I listen to my body just as I've learned to listen to the other growing things in the garden.

Use these exercises to prevent injury and return to doing the things you love.

How to get the most from Dynamic Stretching

1. **Stretch before & after gardening.** Warm-up to relax muscles. Re-balance afterward.
2. **Inhale/Exhale 3-6 times per stretch.** Inhale into tight places,... exhale and relax.
3. **Experiment.** Start small and increase your efforts gradually.
4. **Use your trunk.** Reach from your center while staying firmly rooted to the ground.
5. **Vary activities.** Combine gardening with brisk walking to stay active and injury free.

» Learn about Dynamic Walking



Dynamic Gardening Stretches

Table of Contents

Publication	2
About Dr. Suki	3
Table of Contents	4
Benefits of Stretching and Tips	5
1. Balloon Breathing	6
2. Shoulder Circles	7
3. Neck and Eye Circles	8
4. Finger and Feet Fans	9
5. Arch and Curl	10
6. Twist and Sigh	11
7. High Hip Low Hip	12
8. Leaning Plank (with shoulder push-ups)	13
9. Leaning Plank (with leg exercises)	14
Learn to Love Stretching	15
Your next step	16

The Benefits of Stretching ...

1. Release tension
2. Increase circulation
3. Restore energy
4. Sharpen mental focus
5. Improve posture
6. Prevent injury
7. Protect mobility
8. Sleep deeper



... and Tips to Stretch Effectively



Practice these stretching tips ...

1. Stay present
2. Pay attention to the form
3. Coordinate movements with full breathing
4. Fill up on the inhale and sense the expansion
5. Go to the edge of gentle tension
6. Release on the exhale and drop deeper

BALLOON BREATHING

Expand your lungs



WHY

Breath is life. This exercise expands the chambers of your lungs to absorb more air. It is both energizing and relaxing.

HOW

- Sit comfortably, tall yet relaxed, with both hips evenly balanced on the chair.
- Place both feet on the ground, legs widened. Press your feet down to support balanced posture.
- Start by exhaling fully.
- Pause, wait for the inhale, then fill your torso like a balloon - up and down, front and back, and to both sides.
- Repeat 3-5 times.
- With each inhale imagine air circulating into any tight areas.
- With each exhale, relax deeper into the earth.
- Sit quietly. Close your eyes and notice the sensations and the flow of life within you.
- Use Balloon Breathing for every exercise to maximize your results. Always coordinate full breaths with your movements.

RESULTS

With practice, your diaphragm will relax and strengthen. You'll notice being able to breathe more fully.

SHOULDER CIRCLES

Relax shoulders for better posture and balance



WHY

With constant reaching and arm use, shoulders can slide forward and crimp your respiration. This exercise relaxes shoulders for better posture and balance.

HOW

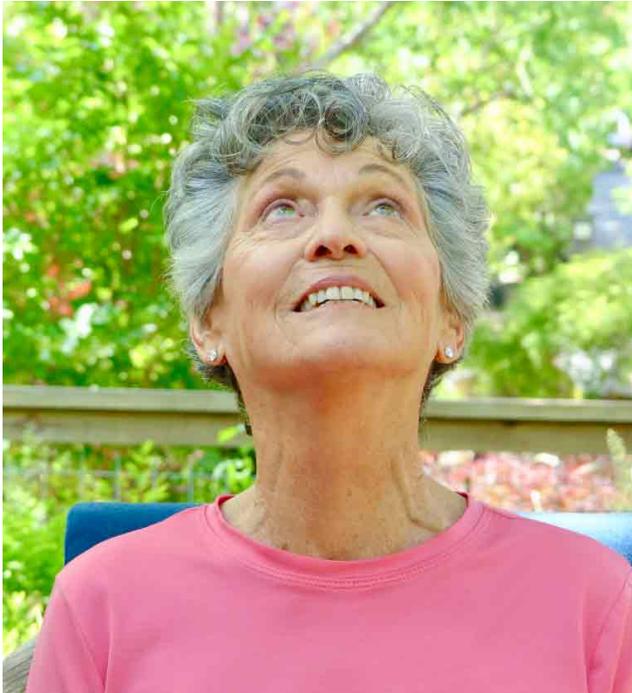
- Sit tall as in the first exercise, hips and feet equally weighted, feet widened.
- Lift your shoulders up.
- Circle shoulders back, squeeze your shoulder blades together, and widen through your chest.
- Drop your shoulders, press them down and elongate your neck.
- Round your shoulders forward and widen through your back.
- Lift and repeat 3 times.
- Rest, relax, and feel your results. Imagine your shoulders hanging relaxed like a coat on a hanger.

RESULTS

With attention, you will notice your neck and shoulders feeling more relaxed throughout the day.

NECK AND EYE CIRCLES

Increase blood flow to your brain and lungs



WHY

Because gardening requires twisting and reaching, while avoiding being poked in the face, its important to keep our neck and eyes responsive. This exercise relaxes your neck, head and eyes to increase blood flow to your brain and sense organs to improve brain function and balance.

HOW

- Sit tall as in the previous exercise, hips and feet equally weighted, feet widened.
- Lift and lower your chin as if to nod yes and *no*. Look up and down with your eyes, too.
- Return to facing your head forward.
- Turn your head side to side as if nodding *no*. As you turn your head gently look behind to your right, then your left.
- Return to facing forward.
- Tilt your right ear toward you right shoulder and look up to the left, then return to center.
- Tilt your left ear toward your left shoulder and look up to your right, then return to center.
- Make circles with your chin. Imagine your head like a ball circling gently at the top of your spine.
- Sit quietly. Close your eyes and notice your sensations and feelings.

RESULTS

With practice, your shoulders and neck will feel more relaxed. Your vision may be crisper; smells can be richer.

FINGER AND FEET FANS AND SELF MASSAGE

Increase blood flow to joints



WHY

These chair exercises loosen wrists and fingers joints. They increase blood flow and circulation so vital for decreasing pain from arthritis. The ankle rotations improve flexibility for responsive balance and a sprightlier walk.

HOW

- Sit tall as in the previous exercise, hips and feet equally weighted, feet widened.
- Circle your wrists first in one direction six times, then in the other direction.
- Coordinate your breathing to your movements.
- Repeat the wrist circles as you spread and fan your fingers, six times in one direction then the other.
- Repeat the wrist circles as you add shoulder rotations, first in one direction six times then in the other.
- Return to tall, balanced posture and notice your results.
- Use one hand to massage the palm and each finger of the other hand.
- Twist and pull each of your 10 fingers as you mobilize as many joints as possible.
- Put your palms and fingers in prayer hands. Separate and lift the heel of your hands to stretch at the base of your fingers. Repeat six times, then shake out your hands.
- Sit tall as you circle one or both ankles first in one direction six times, then the other.
- Spread and fan toes as much as you can.
- Sit quietly and notice your results.

RESULTS

With practice, you will notice its easier to hold and use tools. Your ankles will be more flexible for better balance.

ARCH AND CURL

Build spinal flexibility



WHY

This exercise keeps your spine flexible, the secret to active aging. Spinal exercises also massage the internal organs and circulate lymphatic fluids so important for immunity. Try this seated or standing.

HOW

- If seated, slide forward on chair, feet widened.
- Sit comfortably, spine elongated yet relaxed. Balance both hips evenly on the chair.
- Seated or standing, place your palms on your thighs with your shoulders relaxed.
- Exhale and curl your spine forward into a capital C. Relax your shoulders. Breathe into and widen the back of your body.
- Inhale and return to tall posture, lifted posture.
- Exhale and arch your spine in a backward capital C. Lift and elongate your neck upward. Let your shoulders fall backward and feel your breath in the front of your torso.
- Inhale and return to a tall posture.
- Repeat six times in each direction comfortably increasing your spinal range.
- Notice the sensations in your body, the movement within the stillness.

RESULTS

With practice, you will notice that your spine feels more limber while gardening.

TWIST AND SIGH

Increase spinal rotation



WHY

This exercise improves spinal rotation making it easier to twist to either side to reach high or low. With each exhale, sigh and relax your jaw, face, shoulders and inner organs. Try this seated or standing.

HOW

- If seated, sit tall as in the previous exercise, hips and feet equally widened and weighted.
- Place both feet on the ground, pressing down equally on each foot for postural support.
- Reach your left palm over to the outside of your right hip or thigh just above your knee if sitting.
- On an exhale, use your hand to help you twist to your right. Begin at your hips, then twist each vertebra of your spine from bottom to top until reaching up to your neck and head. Look as far behind as is comfortable to stretch your eyes' muscles.
- Remain twisted and inhale and exhale then return to facing forward.
- Inhale and exhale. Sit tall, shoulders relaxed, both hips and both feet equally pressing down.
- Exhale and repeat to your left. Use your right hand on the outside of your left hip (or thigh if seated) to help you sequentially twist your spine. Imagine your spine like a towel being twisted and lengthened. Inhale and exhale, then release back to center.
- Repeat the sequence a total of six times.
- Close your eyes and notice how you feel.

RESULTS

With practice, you will notice it is easier to turn around or to reach around behind you.

HIGH HIP LOW HIP

Build better balance



WHY

Garden ground is rarely level. Just as your shoulders can move independently, so can your hips. This exercise develops independent hip action for better balance on uneven ground and on stairs. If doing this standing, keep your spine lengthened as you bend forward at the hips. Position your hands on your thighs just above your bent knees for stable support. (Start with micro-movements, then build range.) Try this seated or standing.

HOW

- If seated, sit tall as in the previous exercise, hips and feet equally widened and weighted.
- Place both feet on the ground, pressing down equally to support good posture.
- Place your palms on your thighs with your shoulders relaxed.
- Lift your right heel off the ground (or your right hip off the chair). Lower hip and heel. Coordinate with your breathing.
- Repeat the exercise lifting and lowering your heel and hip.
- Repeat the exercise on both sides six times.
- Repeat lifting each hip without lifting your heel. Isolate and strengthen those core muscles you need for High Hip, Low Hip.
- Notice how you feel.

RESULTS

With practice, you will notice feeling more flexibility in your hips and stability on uneven terrain and stairs.

LEANING PLANK WITH SHOULDER PUSH-UPS

Strengthen your core



WHY

Gardening demands some lifting and tugging. You need a strong core. These exercises build a stronger body from your feet up through your torso. As your back and shoulders strengthen, you can carry a heavier weight without straining. Standing is preferred.

HOW

- Stand tall equally weighted on both feet, shoulders relaxed, full torso breathing.
- Gently bring your belly button toward your backbone to engage core muscles.
- Face a wall or railing with your feet 2'- 3' away.
- Keep your spine straight as you lean forward from your ankles into a plank position with your hands against the railing.
- Keep your shoulders down and relaxed rather than sliding forward on your ribcage.
- Inhale as you hold this position for three to six breath cycles.
- Do push-ups by alternately dropping closer to the railing then pushing away. Repeat six8 times to build upper back and shoulder strength and stretch your calves.
- Push away from the railing to return to standing. Stand tall and notice the feelings in your core.

RESULTS

With practice, you will notice it is easier to keep your arms up for longer when using tools.

LEANING PLANK WITH LEG EXERCISES

Stretch your torso and legs



WHY

Because gardening hunches our spine forward, these exercises stretch muscles in the front of your torso and back of your legs. They help balance the front and back of your whole body for better posture.

HOW

- Stand tall equally weighted on both feet, shoulders relaxed, full torso breathing.
- Face a wall or railing with your feet 1'- 2' away.
- Keep your spine straight, shoulders down, as you lean forward from your ankles into a plank position with your hands against the railing.
- Maintain plank as you step in with your left foot. Press your back right heel down to stretch your back calf muscle. Hold in position for 3 full breaths.
- Arch your back slightly to stretch your front right thigh muscle. Hold in position for 3 full breaths.
- Return to plank position then switch legs and repeat.
- Push your body away from the railing and come to standing.
- Bring your belly button toward your backbone to engage core support.
- Stretch your arms overhead then return them to your sides.

RESULTS

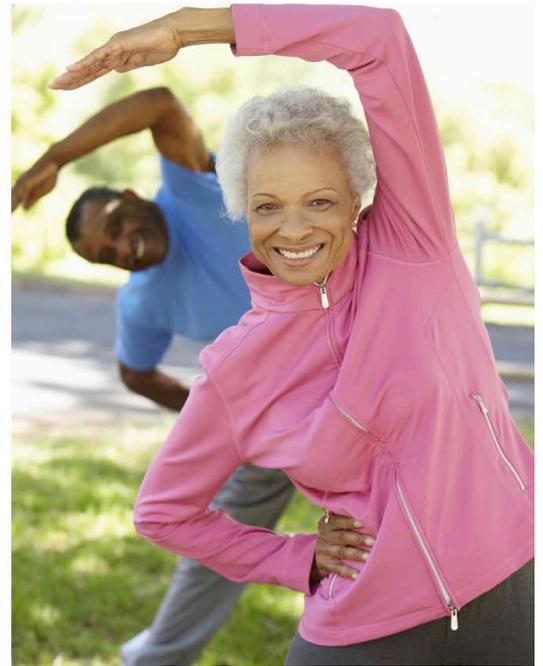
With practice, you will notice better support and flexibility when reaching to prune.

Release, Relax, Re-balance

Learn to Love Stretching

1. Notice when you feel torqued out of shape
2. Stop to stretch
3. Breathe fully, release, and relax
4. Be fully present
5. Sense the changes

Build a Stretching Habit!



Garden Lifelong

Stay active, stay productive



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