

## Accessible Gardening

### Planning the Garden

In garden planning, understanding the needs and abilities of the gardener is important. The garden should be relatively small so that it is manageable and accessible from all angles. It should also be designed so that it is pleasing to the eye.

### Raising the Beds

Gardeners who have difficulty standing or bending for significant periods of time will find that raising their gardens will reduce the amount of bending. Also, with a garden at the right level, they may even be able to sit on a chair. If the garden is quite large, it should be accessible from both sides.

### Growing in Containers

Container gardening is a good way to create interest in a small space. This is a good idea for someone who is just starting out.

Putting the containers on casters is helpful when moving pots from one area to another. Gardeners with limited mobility will find containers easier to access. Because the containers can be moved around, the gardeners can avoid having to stretch from one spot to reach the plants.

### Watering Effectively

It is important to keep water handy. It may be difficult for some people to carry water, and hoses lying in the pathway can create a tripping hazard. Some gardeners will find a portable sprinkler effective while others might want to consider a permanent irrigation system.

Containers and raised beds generally require some extra care. A raised garden

needs more frequent watering than a traditional garden, and containers might need water twice a day during hot weather.

### Walking with Ease

The walkway is a vital part of the garden. The path must be wide enough for a wheelchair to pass through without difficulty. The surface of the path should be smooth, with few, if any, bumps or cracks. Handrails might also be important if the gardener has difficulty walking.

### Finding the Proper Tools

Using the proper tools is essential to making gardening easier. Specialty tools are often available in catalogs and in garden centers. Someone with arthritis might find it easier to use lightweight tools with enlarged, padded handles, and those in wheelchairs will find long-handled tools useful for reaching to the back of the beds.

### Moving Materials

Gardeners who have difficulty walking may find it frustrating moving their tools around the garden. In this case, a child's wagon can be used to easily carry the tools around.

For gardeners in wheelchairs, a wheelchair caddy can be purchased. A wheelchair caddy is attached to the down tubes of the wheelchair (located by the feet), and fold-down plastic struts help carry boxes of materials across the garden.

With some thought and modifications, even physically challenged gardeners can continue to enjoy gardening.

Danielle Wildschut, Class of 2005

### Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery

Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus, 135 Taylor Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0  
phone: (905) 641-2252, ext. 4082; fax: (905) 988-4307 e-mail: [mnewell@niagaracollege.ca](mailto:mnewell@niagaracollege.ca)

Website: <http://greenhousenursery.niagaracollege.ca>