

I am a firm believer that plants and plant-related activities promote health and wellness for us humans.

Both Rita and I find gardening a stress reliever. Not only do we have the opportunity to enjoy each other's company working side by side at something we relish, but we also find its magical effects give us a sense of the natural rhythm of life and an appreciation for the wonders of nature.

Gardening requires one to think. It inspires creativity. The time one spends planning a garden and researching different plants certainly gives the brain a good workout.

Gardening also offers an assortment of physical benefits. It is an ideal form of exercise. It combines three important physical activities: strength, endurance and flexibility. I recall reading that normal gardening will burn as much as 300 calories per hour, and when doing heavy yard work, one can burn in excess of 600 calories per hour.

According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association, "Gardening can benefit people who are recovering from physical illness by retraining their muscles and improving coordination, balance and strength. In addition, simply spending time in nature lowers blood pressure and relieves muscle tension."

To reap such benefits from gardening, I strongly suggest that you adhere to a regular garden exercise routine. Rather than making your outdoor work marathon sessions, it is better to schedule a routine of thirty to sixty minutes of gardening two or three times per week. Also, keep these tips in mind.

- To prevent muscle soreness, warm up before starting and cool down after you are finished by walking and stretching.
- Work at a steady pace, but be sure to change positions every ten minutes to avoid overusing a particular muscle group.
- Protect yourself from the sun. Use sunscreen and wear a hat. Early mornings and evenings are ideal times to garden.
- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, especially if the temperature and humidity are high.
- When lifting or picking up objects, bend your knees and keep your back straight.

Hopefully, I have piqued your interest in the wonderful benefits gained from gardening. Perhaps you would like to witness firsthand how others enjoy gardening and marvel at their creativity. Today, June 23, 2012, the Kearney Soil Sisters and Misters Garden Club and the Minden Beatification Team are both hosting garden walks.

The Soil Sisters and Misters garden walk is scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The cost is \$7.00, and the proceeds will benefit the Kearney Woman's Club and Trails and Rails landscape beatification. One can purchase his or her ticket at any of the five yards featured. Featured yards include the following: 5004 Avenue M Place, 3408 S Avenue, 2808 G Avenue, 2010 8th Avenue and 3320 West Arbor Lane.

The Minden Beautification Team's garden walk features six local Minden gardens. The walk is scheduled from 9:00 am to 12:00 p.m. and begins at 662 S. Logan Street located in southwest Minden, where tickets will be available. Tour booklets will be available at the first garden with a detailed map showing other garden locations. The ticket cost is \$5.00. Proceeds from this garden walk will go toward future Minden Beautification Team projects. A rain date for the walk has been set for June 24 from 1 pm to 4 pm.

I am convinced both events are worthy of your time. Hope to see you there.