

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

by Mary Lew Quesinberry

Gardening Safely

Question, what is the most dangerous hobby? Answer: Gardening! We need to be aware of certain consequences that can occur if we don't plan our outside tasks wisely.

Tetanus: Gardeners need a tetanus booster every 10 years (tetanus is a potentially fatal disease caused by bacteria in soil, dust and manure).

Sun exposure: It can result in skin cancer, cataracts and ugh- wrinkles; use sun block, a broad-brimmed hat; long sleeved shirt, gloves and eye protection.

Heat: Drink a glass of water *before* you go out to work outside to stay ahead of dehydration and take frequent water breaks; also limit caffeine.

Scary creatures: Watch for snakes and wasps- don't reach under or around plants without looking carefully first !

Before you dig: Call Texas One Call (1-800-545-6005) to have underground cables marked- this is a free service and will prevent embarrassing disruption of phone and cable service to you and your neighbors.

Poisonous plants: Choose plant material carefully. Visit www.tamu.edu/plantanswers.edu for a list of toxic plants)

Lifting: Lift with your legs, not your back; use a hand dolly to move heavy bags of gardening supplies and flower pots.

Prevent Falls: Have an assistant brace the ladder when you are painting, cleaning gutters, pruning trees.

Power tools: Follow manufacturer's instructions when using power equipment. (Before you mow, patrol the area and remove any debris that might be caught and thrown by your mower.) Keep children and pets away from your work area.

Chemicals: If you must use chemicals, read and follow the directions on the label. Wear protective clothing such as long pants, long sleeved shirt, closed shoes, eye protection and appropriate gloves. Make handling chemicals the last chore of the day and bathe immediately when you are finished, launder your clothes separately from the family wash and keep the elderly, children and pets away from treated areas until the label indicates that the treated area is safe. Always keep chemicals out of the reach of children.

Garden thoughtfully to prevent accidents, disease and harm to the environment, people and pets. Have a question for a master gardener? ask.bcmga@gmail.com.