

GARDENING

Mature gardeners learn to adjust their methods

Technique can make pastime less painful

Jacqueline Louie
For Neighbours

Faith Wood-Johnson isn't going to let two partial knee replacements stop her from spending time in her garden.

"I'm not as good at squatting as I once was," says Wood-Johnson, 78, who sits on a wheeled cart when she's out in the garden.

"I'm not as good at getting up from the ground as I was — it's easier to do it from sitting on something."

The garden cart she sits on is like a box with a lid.



Adrienne MacDonald-Smith, left, and Faith Wood-Johnson tend to pruning in Adrienne's flower garden near Ghost Reservoir.

She can put tools in it, and it even has a couple of spots for coffee mugs.

For Wood-Johnson,

gardening is "a satisfying thing to do." She has been gardening since the age of five, when she had her own

little garden plot where she grew pansies, nasturtiums, calendulas and other blooms, under the guidance of her father.

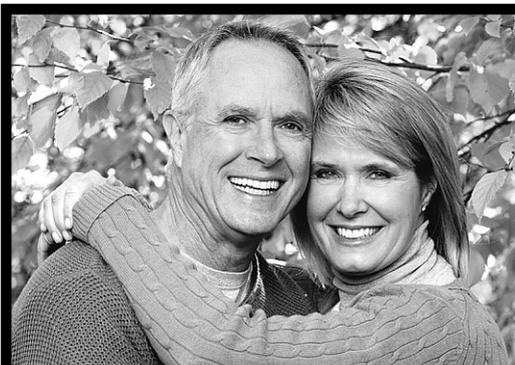
"The thing about getting older is that you do things more slowly, so you have to be prepared to spend more time. You can't go out for eight hours and do what you used to do in eight hours. You may have to modify the way you do it. You have to pace yourself, take more rest in between, and get help to do things."

Gardening "is a very good thing to begin if you are retired," according to Wood-Johnson, a retired physiotherapist who lives west of High River. "You don't have to have a yard. You can garden in big pots — you can grow flowers and vegetables. A lot of people do that in condominiums, or they can rent a garden plot."

Adrienne MacDonald-Smith, an occupational

therapist and longtime gardener who has a vegetable and flower garden at her home near Cochrane, suggests a variety of strategies for older gardeners. For example, ergonomic tools will make it easier on your hands. Kneeling pads will cushion your knees; and a gardening stool can help you get up and down more easily. Raised garden beds are another option. "They're great. You build it up so it's got higher sides, to bring it up to working height which makes life much easier."

Mulching will keep weeds under control, and gardening when it's not blazing hot out is always a good idea. "Wear a hat and sunscreen, keep hydrated, wear gloves, pace yourself and don't go crazy," MacDonald-Smith says.



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