

AgrAbility Virginia



"Promoting success in agriculture for people with disabilities and their families."

Inside this issue:

<i>Summer Sun Tips</i>	1
<i>National Arthritis Month</i>	2
<i>Easy to Use Products</i>	2
<i>Bursitis & Other Soft</i>	2
<i>Spring Planting Season</i>	3
<i>Tips for Selecting Hand</i>	3
<i>"It's All About Luck"</i>	4



Amanda Johnson talks with a client about his farm

AgrAbility Virginia helps agricultural workers with disabilities.

AgrAbility has become one of rural America's most valuable resources, providing assistance to 11,000 farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers nationwide since its inception in 1990. On February 20, 2003, President Bush signed the 2003 Omnibus Appropriations Bill which designated \$4.2M for AgrAbility. The USDA anticipates these funds will cover 24 state projects as well as the National AgrAbility Project.

AgrAbility Virginia started in 2002 after receiving a grant from the USDA.

AgrAbility Virginia has two designated staff members as well as a partnership of professionals across various fields of expertise. Amanda Johnson, Program Coordinator for AgrAbility Virginia was hired in September of 2002 and Renee Bond, Rehabilitation Specialist came on board in October of 2002. They have been working diligently since that time to make AgrAbility Virginia known throughout the state.

Since its inception, AgrAbility Virginia has provided

assistance to 12 farm families across the state. Assistance has ranged from providing information and on-farm assessments to fundraising.

Because the funds AgrAbility Virginia receives from the USDA are not allowed to be used for specific client needs such as tractor lifts, mobility tools, or adaptive devices, AgrAbility Virginia staff members search for funds that will help farmers obtain items to ease their difficulties while on the farm.

Preparing for Summer Sun Some Safety Tips from The Skin Cancer Foundation

1. Avoid unnecessary sun exposure, especially between 10:00am and 4:00pm, the peak hours for harmful ultraviolet radiation. Use wide-brimmed hats, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, UV-protective sunglasses, and umbrellas to

protect you from UV rays when you are out during these hours.

2. Use sunscreens rated SPF 15 or above. Apply them liberally, evenly, and frequently. SPF, or Sun Protection Factor, measures the length of time a product

protects against skin reddening from UVB (ultraviolet B) radiation, compared to how long the skin takes to redden without protection.

3. Examine your skin head to toe at least once every three months.

Look for any changes and see a doctor immediately if you notice any changes.

4. Protect yourself year-round. When you're on snow or ice, your face and eyes are at almost twice the risk of UV damage.

www.skincancer.org



Walking promotes circulation and blood flow throughout the body. Pay attention to the frequency, intensity, and duration of walking. Begin at a slow-to-moderate pace for a few minutes each day and gradually increase the time and intensity of walking.

May is National Arthritis Month

If you're a farmer or rancher, odds are good that you have arthritis and nearly everything you do can make the condition worse. An estimated 1 in 3 farmers and ranchers are affected by arthritis or chronic joint symptoms.

There are more than 100 different types of arthritis and the cause of most types is unknown. Osteoarthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, lupus, gout, and bursitis all fall into the "arthritis" category.

Osteoarthritis, or OA, is one of the most common types of arthritis and is characterized by the breakdown of the joint's cartilage. Cartilage is the part of the joint that cushions the end of the bones. When the cartilage breaks down it causes an uneven surface and may allow the bones to rub together, creating pain, inflammation, and loss of movement. Approximately 20.7 million Americans have OA, and 80% of those people report limitation to some movement or activity.

Because many people do not know they have OA, they cannot make informed decisions on how to treat it. OA is diagnosed through physical exam, symptom history, and X-ray. Treatments may include exercise to improve flexibility and strength, medications, injection of medication into the joint space, heat / cold therapy, weight control to reduce joint stress, and joint protection techniques. **Consult your physician if you experience any of these symptoms.**

Easy-to-Use Products

An estimated 1 in 3 farmers suffers from arthritis or chronic joint symptom.

The Arthritis Foundation have given the following products an Ease-of-Use Commendation Seal.

Advil, Aleve, and BenGay now have easy open caps.. Garden Gals have three garden pruners that have smaller grip spans and reduced spring tension. Dr. Grip pens and mechanical

pencils have been found to reduce writing stress and is easier to use for people with arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and other hand impairments.

Call the Arthritis Foundation, Virginia Chapter at 1-800-456-4687. Or for more information go to www.arthritis.org

Other easy-to-use products are door handle extenders and key extenders which are appropriate for people with difficulty grasping and/or turning. Please visit the AgrAbility website for a list of these tools.

www.agrabilityproject.org

Click on AgrAbility Database

Bursitis and Other Soft Tissue Diseases



Bursitis is inflammation of the bursa, a small fluid-filled sac that acts like a cushion between the muscles and tendons, or between the bones and muscles. **Tendinitis** is an inflammation of the tendon, which attaches a muscle to a bone. Symptoms are pain and swelling in the affected area. Soft tissue diseases are generally

caused by overuse, incorrect positioning, abnormal positioning, and occasionally from infection or along with another disease. The cause of soft tissue disease is not always known. Soft tissue injuries are diagnosed through physical exam and history of symptoms. Other diagnostics such as MRI may be

used in some cases. Treatment may include rest, splints, modification of activity, therapy, medication such as anti-inflammatories, heat/cold treatments and possibly surgery. **Consult your physician if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.**

Spring Planting Season... Don't Let It Get You Down!

Spring time means preparing soil and planting gardens which means a lot of bending, lifting, squeezing, twisting, and stooping

Don't stay in one position too long. Try to alternate tasks such as planting and shoveling. This way you bend for a short period of time and then stand for a short period of time. Also alternate tasks that require repeated wrist and finger movements with whole body tasks. Wrists are par-

ticularly susceptible to tendonitis so be sure to limit your time pruning and spraying.

Use your entire body when doing heavy tasks such as lifting and shoveling. For example, when you are spreading mulch from a wheelbarrow to the garden, use your feet to turn your body rather than twisting. When picking up rocks, bricks, or other items, bend your knees to allow your large leg muscles to aid

in the lift. Use your forearm and arm to use a trowel rather than bending repeatedly at the wrist.

Add padding to your tools to prevent injuries to the hand and wrist. Make sure bucket handles and other heavy objects have large enough handles to provide you with a comfortable grip. You can add non-slip padding, foam tape, and bicycle grip tape to tool handles to reduce discomfort.



Pistol grip add-ons reduce bending and can be added to shovels, brooms, rakes, and other tools.

What To Look For When Selecting Tools

Everyone—including farmers coping with arthritis, stroke, hand amputations, or strain injuries—can benefit from improved hand tools. It is important to remember that no one hand tool is perfect for every user. Ergonomic tools attempt to reduce injuries while increasing tool efficiency.

Features that decrease force or grip strength.

Generally, tools with longer handles require less force because of the extra leverage. Tools with slightly wider handles allow the grip force to be distributed over a larger surface and therefore decrease grip strength required to perform the task. Consider the optimum opening span for your hand; if you have small hands you want a tool that doesn't overextend your grasp. Cush-

ion grips may also increase comfort and reduce grip force. A variety of materials may be used to modify the handles of most tools. Materials include Magic Wrap, Plastic Dip, My Grip, Heat-shrink Tubing, Tool Wrap and pipe insulation.

Features that decrease repetitive motion.

Repetitive strain injuries, or RSI are a family of injuries that affect muscles, tendons, nerves, and joints often occurring in the hand, neck, back, or arm. Ergonomists agree that poor posture, applied force, and repetitive tasks combine to increase the risk of a RSI.

Using tools with a ratcheting mechanism or gears can help to reduce repetition. Keep tools properly maintained to reduce force (as in using dull saw blades) and repetition.

Using power tools can help but be careful not to exchange repetition for vibration, which can also lead to injury. Using pliers and scissors that have spring-loaded handles will reduce the force needed from the hand. Some new tools such as the Stanley®SharpTooth™ blade reports a 50% reduction in cutting time due to a unique tooth design.

Features that decrease awkward body postures.

Poor wrist positioning can diminish grip strength. One study reported decreases in grip strength between 14 and 27% depending on position. Several hammers and pliers are designed with bend handles to allow a more neutral wrist position. Add-on pistol grips can be added to improve wrist posture

Look for tools with features that decrease force or grip strength, repetitive motion, and awkward body postures.



Pistol grip add-ons can also be used to keep the hand and wrist in neutral postures.



201 East Main Street, Salem VA 24153

Phone: 540-777-7325 or 800-365-1656

Fax: 540-777-2194

Email: rbond@va.easter-seals.org



Creating solutions. changing lives.



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY



VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Visit us on the web!

www.agrabilityproject.org

AgrAbility Virginia is a joint effort of:

Easter Seals Virginia, Virginia Cooperative Extension,
Department of Rehabilitative Services, Virginia Assistive Technology System,
Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Virginia Farm Bureau, Centers for Independent Living, and Virginia Disability Service Agencies.

AgrAbility Virginia is funded in part by the US Department of Agriculture (Project #02-41590-01389) and administered by Virginia Cooperative Extension and Easter Seals Virginia.

Easter Seals Virginia and Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity / affirmative action employer.

It's All About Luck.



“There is all luck in it, so much luck that they don't talk about it, the luck, don't say a word about it; so much luck they smile and shrug and pray to themselves while they work and wait for the bad things to come. If it doesn't rain the seeds won't come up; if it rains too much the seeds won't come up; if it rains but then doesn't rain again at the right time the seeds will come up but the plants will die; if the

rain comes but comes too much the plants will die; if the rain doesn't come at first and the wind comes the topsoil will blow away enough to uncover the seeds and blow them *away* and they will die; if the rains come perfectly and the wind doesn't come but the mustard weeds get a good start the plants will be choked off; if everything works exactly right and the rains come at the right time but not too often and the

wind doesn't come and the weeds don't overcome them the plants will grow and they will head and they will become ripe and grow golden and then, and then if the wind stays away and doesn't come to rip the heads loose and the hail doesn't come to flatten the stiff, brittle dying plants and grasshoppers don't come to eat what has grown, *then* there might be a harvest.”
Taken from Gary Paulsen's "Clabbered Dirt, Sweet Grass"