

5 Poses for Yoga in the Garden

When I ask my students who are gardeners if they do yoga stretches when they garden, they tell me the hardest part is to remember to stop. Usually when we get into the garden we have a sense of SO much to do, or we're tackling a big project that we know will take a lot of time. And of course, gardening is another thing in life that doesn't have an "ending". It goes on and on and evolves and changes like everything living.

Seems to me there are two things to address. One is to change our time mindset to acknowledge that gardening is endless - and endlessly enjoyable if we relax with it. We can apply the Niyama (personal practices of yoga) of Santosha, contentment, and invite our minds to relax wherever we are in the process. It's a wise practice to cultivate for all of life!

The second thing to address is to find ways that will get you to stop and take a break. Moving our bodies in a different way (especially if we're doing something repetitive like pruning or deadheading) is a welcome and healing break for our muscles, joints, and spines. To begin, you might set a timer where you'll hear it (in your pocket?). As you make a practice of taking short breaks, your body will remind you on its own. Don't forget to drink plenty of water during your gardening, too.

Here are 5 of my favorite poses when I'm gardening. They can all be done together as a series - or separately - and in the garden or when you come in for a break. They contain a full variety of spinal movements to help you stretch every way after all your work. Breathe fully and easily as you go.

1. Half-Moons

Inhale arms up, arcing gently to one side on the exhale, lower hand coming down to your side or hip. Inhale back up and create that half moon curve on the other side. Reach down through your legs and feet as you lift up and lengthen the spine up through the crown of the head.

2. Warrior I

Step your right foot forward into a comfortable lunge. Align the knee directly over the ankle. Lift the heel behind you as you need for this high lunge version. Hips face forward along with the torso. Lift the arms out to the sides or up overhead and breathe into your strength & courage.

3. Downward Dog stretch

Put your hands on a wall or countertop, bend the knees, and stretch the spine from crown of the head all the way back to the tailbone. Breathe fully! If you're in a space to do a full downward dog on the ground and you're familiar with it, go for it.

4. Swinging twists

Plant your feet wider than your hips and begin to gently turn the hips side to side. Keep the knees slightly bent and lift the heel behind you as you go so there's no twisting in the knees. Let the arms swing around you and relax the shoulders. Turn the head with the torso, releasing your neck as you enjoy this twist.

5. Yoga Mudra

Step the feet wide, bring the hands together behind your back. Interlace the fingers, or grab a tie or a towel between your hands to give your shoulders the space they need. Relax the shoulders back and down, bend at the knees and hinge forward at hips drawing the arms up off the back. Breathe into your back side as it stretches gently. For some, this easily becomes an inverted pose; for others you're simply stretching the spine no more than parallel to the ground. Come back up slowly with knees still bent when you're ready.

When you're completely done with your work, take a few minutes to lie down on the floor and put your legs up on a couch or chair, or lie on a couch with your feet up. Take a deep breath and let out a satisfied sigh! Ahhhh - relax completely. Breathe easy.



Pam Jackson has practiced yoga and gardening for over 20 years. You'll find her either in the garden or on the living room floor sighing out that satisfied Ahhhh after gardening.... or teaching at WholeHeart Yoga Center, www.wholeheartyyoga.com.

Pam Jackson, June 2016

pam@wholeheartyyoga.com