



# MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

## THINKING SAFE AND GREEN



**AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**#20**

### **COMPUTER WORKSTATIONS**

*Information given here is intended for use by program representatives, master gardeners, and those they train.*



Performing tasks at a computer workstation involves repeating the same types of motions over and over again. These types of repetitive motions put stress on muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Prolonged repetitive motion stress can result in repetitive motion injuries. In addition, continuous sitting at a computer workstation can cause pressure on the discs between the vertebra of the back and pooling of blood in the legs. This Thinking Safe and Green note provides information to reduce the potential for repetitive motion injuries and increase comfort while sitting for long periods of time. **Safety videos and information that address setting up a computer workstation are available at the ANR Environmental Health & Safety website: <http://safety.ucanr.org/ergonomics>.**

#### **Recommended Computer Workstation Practices**

- Adjust chair height so that feet are flat on the floor or footrest at about shoulder width.
- Sit straight in chair with lower back firmly supported against the backrest. The upper back should be lightly touching the backrest.
- Position the computer monitor so it is at a distance of about 24 inches from the user and away from lighting that causes screen glare.
- The computer monitor should be located in front of the keyboard and user.
- The top of the computer monitor screen should be at eye level when the user is sitting upright. Users that wear bifocals should position the computer screen slightly lower.
- The keyboard should be located close to the computer user and at a height whereby the user's shoulders remain relaxed and forearms are parallel to the floor. The bottom of the user's elbows should be at the same height as the keyboard.
- The mouse should be located adjacent to the keyboard on the same surface.
- Movement of a mouse should alternately take place from the both the shoulder and wrist.
- When typing, the wrists should remain straight. If necessary, use a padded wrist rest to maintain a straight wrist position.
- While typing, fingers, hands, wrists, arms, and shoulders should be relaxed.
- Locate work materials in front of the computer user. If necessary, employ a document holder to position work materials in front of the user.
- Frequently change body positions and take short stretch breaks every 30 minutes.
- Rest the eyes hourly by looking away from the monitor and focusing on distant objects.
- Intersperse other activities with computer typing tasks, especially those that allow individuals to leave their chairs and stand or walk.

**Thinking Safe and Green note #19 provides additional information about prolonged sitting. See <http://safety.ucanr.org/MG/>.**