Most back injuries among nursery workers in Alabama are caused by improper lifting techniques. The third most common injury among nursery workers in the Southeast is to the back, according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). These injuries can be avoided by using safe lifting and carrying techniques.

Proper lifting entails using the leg muscles instead of the back muscles to lift a load. First, size up the load and check over all conditions. Do not attempt to lift by yourself if the load is too heavy or awkward. Be sure there is enough space for movement and that the footing is good. Be sure there are no obstructions in the planned path of movement to prevent tripping. To lower the object, bend the knees; don’t stoop.

Team Lifting Must Be Coordinated

If the weight, shape, or size of an object makes the job too much for one person, ask for help. One person needs to be responsible for control of the action to ensure proper coordination. If one worker lifts too soon, shifts the load, or lowers it too soon, either worker may be injured. Both workers must work together and communicate expected actions.

Important Points of Proper Lifting

- Bend your knees to lift an object; do not stoop.
- Keep your back straight by tucking in your chin.
- Lift with your leg muscles, not with your back muscles.
- Get a good grasp on the object with the palms of your hands.
- Keep your arms and hands close to your body while carrying the load.

- Watch your feet to avoid tripping.
- To lower the object, bend your knees; do not stoop.
- Team lifting must be coordinated with all actions communicated between team members.

Jesse LaPrade, Ph.D. Extension Environmental and Farm Safety Specialist, Auburn University

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county’s name to find the number.

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