

OPTIMA

MAGAZINE

08 JULY 2006 no. 348

Inside:

Summer Recipes for Chantenay Carrots

Plus:

Out and About in Hertfordshire – and Spain...



DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY TO OVER 42,000 HOMES IN S.HERTFORDSHIRE & N.MIDDLESEX

al fresco fitness...

When the great British summer finally arrives, most people's priority is a few weeks of al fresco living. It should be at the top of everyone's list to get out and make the most of it - and that need not exclude exercise. Fitness coach **Craig O'Toole** offers a few tips for making the most of the opportunity.

Instead of going to your local gym and spending 45 minutes on the treadmill, longingly gazing out of the window at the glorious weather and wishing you were enjoying it, why not take your work-out outdoors? The benefits are numerous.

For starters the fact that you're not staring at the same four walls, and are likely to see different things every time, can be a great motivator, as can the fresh air and sunshine. Most people experience a higher boredom threshold when exercising outdoors - so you exercise for longer before you lose interest, meaning that you're getting fitter and enjoying yourself more at the same time. Fantastic! Another major benefit of the great outdoors is that last time I checked it was free... and getting started is as easy as going for a walk.

To work-out outdoors the only pieces of equipment you need are your trainers and your imagination: the possibilities are endless. And just because you are outdoors it need not mean that you can't still be organised. If you are planning to pound the streets, for example, then plan a route in advance and drive it in the car to measure the distance. Each time you run or walk it you can time how long it takes you and try to beat it on your next session. If you wanted you could then calculate your minute/mile pace. If you're regularly running or walking a circuit of your local area, try doing it in the opposite direction to keep you interested and motivated. It's surprising the difference small changes like this can make!

If you don't fancy breathing fumes whilst dodging traffic and pedestrians then consider your local parks, woodland trails, footpaths, canal towpaths (and anywhere else that comes to mind). Your mode of exercise need not be restricted to running either. Why not dig the mountain bike out from the back of the garage and head for your nearest cycle path? There are many locally, and a quick internet search should have you pedalling in no time.

If you fancy the idea of exercise a lfresco-style, but want a total body workout then your local playground is about as good as it gets. Those slides and seesaws may look like child's play, but with a bit of thought they can be your own personal outdoor gym. The soft rubber matting is ideal for abdominal crunches, back-extensions and other floor work; benches can be used for dips (to work the back of the arms); climbing frames for chin-ups (front of the arms) and you can incorporate other body weight exercise like press-ups and squat thrusts as well. To get the most from these exercises it's best to do them in a circuit fashion. So you could choose 5-10 exercises and do each one for 30 seconds with no rest in between, and then jog for 2 minutes and repeat as many times as your fitness allows. Or if you have several playgrounds locally, jog between them and try to repeat the exercises at each. (You should, of course, check any local restrictions on adult use of children's recreation areas.)

If you'd prefer some company while you're out and about you'll find that many gyms and leisure centres are extending their indoor provision to run jogging, walking and cycling clubs catering from total beginners to the more advanced.

As with all forms of exercise that are new to you, start slowly and build up gradually. The forces transmitted to the bones and joints can be considerably greater outside than on the treadmill or stepper in the gym. Listen to your body, and if you're feeling pain or discomfort rest until the pain disappears. But don't let this put you off, as the fitness and enjoyment benefits of exercising outside far outweigh the risk!

So what are you waiting for? Find those trainers, get outside and enjoy these few weeks of good weather we do have - and you'll be improving your fitness levels at the same time!!

Happy Training...

