

Gardening and Landscaping for Better Health

Cecile Serazo, Eastern Highlands Health District

Be Well Program

Gardening and landscaping can be a great way to be physically active

<https://www.southernliving.com/garden/gardening-twice-week-improves-well-being-relieves-stress>



Gardening gets us out in nature

- ▶ Being out in nature assists with stress reduction
- ▶ Trees and plants release chemicals that strengthen the immune system
- ▶ In a study, a naturalistic induction of awe in which participants stood in a grove of towering trees enhanced prosocial helping behavior and decreased entitlement compared to participants in a control condition. ([Perspectives on Psychological Science](#))



Gardening is a form of exercise



- ▶ The evidence is clear—physical activity can make you feel better, function better, and sleep better. Even one session of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity reduces anxiety, and even short bouts of physical activity are beneficial. Being physically active also fosters normal growth and development, improves overall health, can reduce the risk of various chronic diseases.
- ▶ According to the Centers for Disease Control, gardening is considered moderate cardiovascular exercise. If you spend time in your garden, weeding, digging, planting, raking, hoeing, for 30 to 45 minutes a day, you can expect to increase your heart rate and burn 150 to 300 calories.
- ▶ Gardening/landscaping is cross training as you are doing walking, strength exercise and stretching.

(Source: [Henry Ford Health](#))

Gardening, specifically Community Gardening is a source of positive social interaction

- ▶ In studies of participants in community gardens a significant reduction in stress, fatigue and depression were noted. ([Review and Analysis of the Benefits, Purposes, and Motivations Associated with Community Gardening in the United States](#))
- ▶ “Community gardens are associated to health gains for their users, irrespective of age, being an affordable and efficient way of promoting physical and mental health and well-being. To encourage the design, maintenance, and prospective evaluation of supportive urban environments promoting healthy and, at the same time, sustainable lifestyles, is essential to achieve public health gains and environmental sustainability” ([National Library of Medicine](#))



Gardening allows you to get sufficient Vitamin D

- ▶ Vitamin D is important to bone health, the immune system, and other functions.
- ▶ The body makes vitamin D with the use of sunlight.
- ▶ Exposure to sunlight can also increase your risk for skin cancer to balance the benefits and the risk make sure to wear sunscreen and a hat. Also get some of your Vitamin D from food sources such as eggs and dairy.



Improved mood from being active and in nature

- ▶ The Reducing Anxiety with Nature and Gardening survey done in 2020 during the Covid-19 Pandemic found “ Among participants, 46% reported anxiety symptoms. Participants who had gardened ≥ 15 years and those gardening > 8 h over two weeks had lower anxiety scores. Spending more time outdoors on weekdays also decreased anxiety scores.” [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#)
- ▶ Horticultural Therapy The practice of horticultural therapy uses plants, gardens, and nature-based activities to promote well-being. Its practice is an effective, evidence-based therapeutic modality similar to music, art, recreation and other experiential therapies.

Contact with soil can trigger a release of serotonin

- ▶ Studies suggest that being in contact with the microbes in soil can stimulate the release of serotonin. ([Journal of American society for Horticultural Science](#))
- ▶ Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that supports bone health, blood clotting, sleep, digestion and mood.
- ▶ **Note:** People with very weakened immune systems such as those undergoing cancer treatment should talk to their physician before coming in contact with soil or plants.



Source: Google Image

Gardening May Help You to Live Longer

- ▶ There are communities around the world where people tend to live the longest. These areas are sometimes called Blue Zones. One of the things the people in these communities have in common is that people garden way into their later years.
- ▶ “Australian researchers following men and women in their 60s found that those who regularly gardened had a **36% lower risk of dementia** than their non-gardening counterparts”. ([National Library of Medicine](#))
- ▶ Gardening can increase and maintain cognitive function Some research shows that gardening can protect and treat dementia. ([Banner Health](#))



STILL GOING STRONG

A young girl with a flower in her hair is holding a potted plant. Next to her, an elderly woman with short grey hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt and green overalls, is holding a basket of pink flowers and a single pink rose. They are standing on a yellow background.

Getting older doesn't have to mean giving up your favorite activities.

Simple actions, like wearing proper footwear to improve your stability, can help reduce your risk of injury so you can live life in full bloom.



Learn how you can age without injury at cdc.gov/StillGoingStrong

When you grow your own fruits, vegetable, and herbs you improve your diet

- ▶ Fruits and vegetables are packed with fiber and essential vitamins and minerals. Research has shown that eating fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet can reduce your risk for long-term diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer. The fiber in fruits and vegetables can help relieve constipation and normalize your bowel movements.
- ▶ A study in Colorado of urban adults found that people who joined a community garden ate 1.4 more times per day more fruits and vegetables than those who did not participate and were 3.5 times more likely to eat the recommended 5 servings of vegetables per day. ([Loma Linda University Health](#))



Garden or Landscape at Your Level

- ▶ Gardening can be done in containers, raised beds, or in pots in your window
- ▶ Know your ability and don't overdo it, start small
- ▶ Start or join a community garden
- ▶ Go to your local library and get resources on gardening

- ▶ Access information from the UCONN extension programs for information on how to start and maintain your landscape or garden



Don't Forget.....

- ▶ Drink fluids to keep well hydrated
- ▶ Wear a hat
- ▶ Wear sunscreen
- ▶ Use gloves for heavy duty work
- ▶ Perform a tick check at the end of your gardening session



Gardening Stretched: Pain-Free Gardening

<https://blog.ohiohealth.com/gardening-stretches-pain-free-gardening/>

More Gardening Resources

- ▶ [Plants: Partners in Health? Vegetables, Fruits, Herbs and You](#), NIH News in Health
- ▶ [Using Gardening and Landscaping to Increase Physical Activity](#), University of Georgia Extension
- ▶ [Getting Started with Vegetable Gardening](#), UCONN Extension
- ▶ [Monthly Gardening Tips for Connecticut](#), UCONN Extension

Questions



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