

8 Great Health Benefits of Gardening

Source: [Sunlife](#)

Dye your thumb green because the evidence is in – gardening has many health benefits.

We have rounded up some of the latest research about health and gardening. Overall, it shows that gardening can help you get active, eat better, and feel happier. “There is evidence that gardeners are healthier than people who are not gardeners,” says Scott Thomas, a kinesiologist at the University of Toronto.

What are the benefits of gardening?

From time outside to getting your body moving, gardening has many benefits. Here are eight reasons why shovelling, planting and weeding are good hobbies.

1. Gardening gets you outside

Being in nature has clear [health benefits](#). Spending time outside increases physical activity and helps you calm your mind, research has shown. Spending time in nature can reduce the tendency to [dwell on negative thoughts](#). Even [looking](#) at pictures of nature can improve your mental focus.

2. Gardening can support your immune system

When you spend time in the sun, your skin absorbs those rays and makes vitamin D. This vitamin helps keep your immune system strong so you can fight off viruses and infections. Vitamin D also helps your body [absorb calcium](#) you eat, which keeps your bones and teeth strong.

3. Gardening is exercise

According to the [Centres for Disease Control](#), light gardening or yard work burns about 330 calories an hour. That’s about as much as dancing and more than walking. Gardening can help you get your heart rate up through movement. That lowers your risk of obesity and many related problems, like [heart disease](#).

Exercise needs to be more physical work than you normally do to be effective, Thomas says. Make sure that what you’re doing in the garden is enough physical activity to challenge yourself.

4. Garden work can lower your blood pressure

Moving every day is important for many health reasons. Those who do manual labour tend to have lower blood pressure than expected, Thomas says. He did a [study](#) that asked older women to squeeze a simple device with their hand regularly. The device was similar to a gardening tool. After eight weeks, the women had lower blood pressure. In another [study](#), women over 80 showed lower blood pressure and less anxiety after working with plants.

5. Gardening skills can help the whole family

School gardening programs that teach kids how to plant and care for vegetables teaches them about nutrition. [One study](#) found kids who participated a gardening program ate more vegetables afterward. A McMaster University [study](#) found that older adults who gardened had better quality of life. Get the kids and grandparents out for a spring day in the home garden and everyone benefits.

6. Community gardens have benefits - like new friends

Community gardening is thriving. Carving out your own little patch of land in a community plot helps you meet other gardeners. Having an active [social life](#) is great for your mental health. Some doctors have even started [prescribing social activities](#), including gardening, for depression and anxiety. “We know that activities that have both a social and physical component to them tend to have stronger effects on cognition,” Thomas says. While you may not be able to enjoy all the social benefits of gardening during social distancing, it’s something to look forward to later.

7. A healthy garden helps you eat your greens

When your next snack is growing in the backyard, it becomes easier to eat fresh fruit, herbs and vegetables. Growing vegetables yourself also lets you pick them at the perfect time. Ripe vegetables may have [more nutrients](#) than those pale tomatoes from your supermarket.

8. Gardening can relieve stress

Moving your body is good for your mental health. Gardening, specifically, can help you manage stress and mental health too. A 2017 [research review](#) gathered evidence from many studies showing that gardeners had less stress, anxiety and depression.

So if you’re looking for a reason to get your hands dirty this spring, you have eight of them!

Measures put in place to help contain the spread of COVID-19 are gradually changing. Please remember to follow public health directives for gathering and social distancing in your region.