

How can gardening improve your mood

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From keen weekend horticulturalists to those who take things more seriously, millions of people in the UK enjoy getting out into the garden—with gardening ranked among the most popular hobbies in the country. Gardeners often credit cultivating their outdoor space as one of the things that keeps them sane, but have you ever wondered why those

who garden seem happier and healthier than those who don't?

So why are green-fingered people happier—and more importantly, could you use gardening to improve your own wellbeing?

Enjoying the Great Outdoors

Spending time outdoors is arguably one of the best ways to improve our mental and physical wellbeing, and gardening is a great way to do this. The benefits of being outside are about more than just enjoying some fresh air though.

Psychological studies into the benefits of exercising outside actually showed that those who swapped a run on the treadmill inside the local gym for a jog in the great outdoors saw an improvement in their mood; even those who still opted to exercise inside but had a clear view of nature felt happier than those who ran without a view. Research has also shown that having a view of greenery and plants can speed up recovery for hospital patients which suggests that simply by feeling closer to nature—when we're gardening for example—we generally feel happier.

Creating Your Personal Sanctuary

When it comes to feeling completely relaxed, often, there's no place like home. Filled with the things we love and home to our most precious memories, our homes are considered to be our own personal sanctuary by many of us, so why should our gardens be any different?

When interviewed for research, gardeners who had emigrated said that bringing things from their country of origin into their gardens made them feel more 'at home' in their new country. From filling your outdoor space with plants that remind you of a particular time in your life to

evoking the flavours of your childhood by growing certain fruits or vegetables, in the same way that we fill our homes with trinkets and mementos, the garden is a great place to express our own history and culture.

Every garden, big or small, allotment or rolling meadow, is an opportunity to put your own stamp on a space and the process of planning and taking care of your garden can have a hugely positive impact on your wellbeing.

The Mindful Gardener

From the scent of a flower and the silky feel of grass underfoot, to the contrasting colours and textures of a border and lazy hum of a bumble bee, stepping into your garden engages all of the senses. But it's not just the fragrant scent of a flower bed that can make us feel calmer.

A new buzz phrase in recent years is 'mindfulness', and this comes back to a long established method of focusing the mind on the moment you are in. Being absorbed in gardening can distract your attention away from the stresses and strains of everyday life and prevent your mind from wandering to more stressful things—you are quite simply focusing on the task at hand, allowing other concerns to be put aside.

Time can often feel like it runs away with you when you're gardening. But 'nature's time' isn't just a figment of our imagination. Research has shown that gardening can actually alter your perception of time, with gardeners reporting that it can feel like time is standing still when they're in the garden. So losing yourself to a few hours on nature's clock, without worrying about everyday responsibilities can be a great way to take a breath and focus the mind.

Even the more mundane garden chores—keeping your secateurs sharp or

weeding—let us take time away from our everyday duties, which frees our minds to deal with issues in a more effective way when we come back to them later on.

The Sociable Gardener

Although sometimes it might feel like gardening is a solo hobby, it can also be a fantastic way to become more involved with the wider community. Whether it's lending your skills and expertise to a neighbour or attending shows or public events, becoming more involved in the gardening community can make you feel part of something. This is a key factor in boosting your mood; learning from other gardeners and sharing your own knowledge gives us a shared experience, which studies have shown is another important factor in improving overall sense of wellbeing.

As the old saying goes, every day is a school day and gardening is no different. As with any other hobby, it's something that is honed over many years, and for a lot of people, [gardening](#) is about trying new things and experimenting until they get it right.

Provided by University of Lincoln

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