# How Gardening as a Hobby Improves Mental Health

#### There are many strategies that can help in boosting one's mental wellness such as exercise, diet, or social interactions. However, rarely do people acknowledge a special hobby that can also boost mental health in many ways--and that is gardening. What are some mental health benefits of gardening? Read to find out more.

Gardening may have the stigma that it is an "old crowd's hobby", but this is far from the truth. In fact, gardening is making a comeback since there is a heightened awareness about advocacies that support the environment. Many issues found in social media, blogs, and other sources also support activities like growing your own vegetable or herbs for consumption. Those who are interested in health are trying this hobby as it makes a trendy comeback.

## What is the history of gardening?

The gardens in [ancient history](http://www.localhistories.org/gardening.html) were made for food production. In ancient Egypt, gardens were made so people can grow herbs and vegetables. As the civilization progressed and the upper class people emerged, gardening also became a leisure. Some of those in the upper class enjoyed having gardens that were aesthetically pleasing. This led to the planting of flowers, bushes, succulents, shrubs, and trees. People hired servants to tend to large gardens, or had their own small garden in the back or front yards.

Now, there are also gardens made for relaxation. Many cities offer [botanical gardens](https://www.travelchannel.com/interests/arts-and-culture/photos/best-botanical-gardens-in-the-us) that can provide a peaceful environment. The plants in botanical gardens are not only pleasing to look at, but they can also emit an aroma or scent that can provide health benefits.

If you are contemplating pursuing gardening as a hobby, there are some of the following reasons why it can help improve your mental and overall health.

## Plants can help reduce symptoms of anxiety.

Anxiety can be caused by the stressors that inevitably happen in everyday life. In fact, 20% of the US population has already suffered from diagnosed anxiety issues. These do not include people who regularly experience chronic stress. As people build awareness of how to care for their mental health, it is good to know that plants can play a big part in stress reduction.

In a [2008 study](https://www.pushdoctor.co.uk/blog/6-mental-health-benefits-of-plants-does-flower-power-boost-your-mood), it was discovered that people who see flowers in their presence help them feel less anxiety. Subconsciously, the people felt more positive, especially when they are recovering from illnesses in the hospital. They also reported lesser instances of aftercare going forward their discharge orders. Additionally, those who suffer from [depression and alcohol](https://mountainspringsrecovery.com/alcohol/alcohol-and-depression/) abuse may also benefit from tending and caring for plants, as addictions and mental instability are often triggered by stress.

If you are looking to reduce stress through gardening, it is suggested that you plant colorful flowers in season. Caring for them and watching them bloom can be a relaxing and rewarding activity all at the same time. Additionally, you can pick these flowers to place in your vases at home for a pleasing indoor environment.

## Increased oxygen consumption.

Some mental and physical ailments are often caused by the lack of oxygen in the body. When we are in a highly urbanized environment, it can be difficult to find fresh air because of the lack of plants. Creating a garden solves this problem as it is a scientific fact that plants increase the oxygen percentage in an area.

Breathing in more oxygen helps in improving brain activity and alertness. Additionally, it also helps in blood circulation which will help you feel more energized. Some of the top recommended plants to have an [oxygen-rich garden](https://lunginstitute.com/blog/top-5-plants-for-increasing-oxygen/) include the Arcea Palm, Money Plant, Gerbera Daisy, and Chinese Evergreens. These plants quickly go through photosynthesis which makes it possible to release oxygen in the atmosphere.

## Garden-fresh vegetables and vegetables can boost the brain.

Although we may not see the whole process of handling commercial vegetables and fruits, it is important to know that these types of produce are often riddled with chemicals from pesticides, genetically-modifying chemicals, and other pollutants that can deter our health.

[Growing your own vegetables](https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/vegetables/vgen/vegetable-gardening-for-beginners.htm) from a garden frees you from these substances, making it possible to have food that tastes fresh and is completely healthy. You can also opt to have your own natural weed-killers and pesticides which are safe and won't aggravate any mental health problems.

Some of the best plants to include in your vegetable garden are broccoli, [spinach](https://www.thespruce.com/growing-spinach-1403448), and most leafy greens. As for fruits, berries would be an excellent brain-boost because of their antioxidant properties.

## Gardening is also considered a physical activity.

Gardening may seem like a peaceful task, but those who have been in the hobby for quite a while knows that it can be quite a handful in terms of physical activity. If you are making a garden from scratch, it is interesting to note that some of the related gardening activities can burn as much as 600 calories per hour.

Here is a list of activities related to tending a garden and their average calorie burn:

* Shoveling snow or dirt: 400-600 calories/hour
* Moving rocks and landscaping: 400-600 calories/hour
* Raking and cleaning up leaves: 350-450 calories/hour
* Mowing grass: 250-350 calories/hour
* Planting, pulling weeds, watering: 200-400 calories/hour

There are [studies](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658/) which support how physical activity can help in mental wellness. Being involved in appropriate physical activities helps improve blood circulation in the brain, which also triggers the release of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. These substances are known to reduce stress, increase energy, and boost the mood.

## Gardening helps improve one's confidence

Feelings of depression and anxiety often stem from [intrusive thoughts](https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/unwanted-intrusive-thoughts). These intrusive thoughts which are negative can appear in idle times, when the brain is not occupied with hobbies or other meaningful activities.

Gardening can be one way to improve mental health by providing a means of distraction from these intrusive thoughts. Since it involves logically planning and executing a process, the brain can be exercised to think of the steps involved rather than ruminating on negative thoughts and feelings. When a task is accomplished, gardeners feel confident and happy about the results, contributing to one's sense of fulfillment.

At first, it may appear that gardening can be stressful and difficult. However, those who take time to enjoy the process feel confident about the end product because it can be quite a meaningful hobby.

## Gardening is a brain exercise.

Gardening may be quite simplistic to outsiders--they might think it's as easy as looking for a seed, planting a seed, then watering it until it grows. Thankfully, gardening is a little more challenging than most people think. It isn't a stressful challenge though--rather it is more of a brain exercise that helps those who would like to be mentally stimulated.

In fact, there is an [article in Alzheimers.net](https://www.alzheimers.net/2014-06-16/gardening-helps-alzheimers/) which talks about how garden therapy can help in this progressive neural disease. Gardening helps engage the senses, which turns up the neurons to create synapses to boost one's memory and brain activity.

If you are looking for mentally stimulating activities aside from reading books, solving puzzles or playing board games, it can help to try gardening as a part of your outdoor hobby.

## Improve your mental health: Have a green thumb now!

If you are still on the fence in pursuing gardening as a hobby, consider the reasons mentioned above. Not only will your garden be a piece for conversation and a source of pride, it can also help boost your overall health and wellness.