

GARDENING CAN BOOST YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

There's something to be said for the simple pleasures in life, and few are as wholesome, gratifying and rewarding as gardening. But more than that, research is increasingly confirming that growing flowers and edible plants can be healing, particularly when it comes to mental health.

Read on to find out why you should dust off your gardening tools.

1 It's a reliable activity to look forward to

When you schedule an hour a day for pruning, weeding, cutting and planting, you allow yourself to get lost in a space of normalcy and dependability, which can ground you. And, more than just a good way to fight stress, gardening is also a good return on investment, because everything you do bears fruit in time. For example, when you plant corms in the winter and tend them over the cold months, you'll have beautiful flowers to enjoy in the spring.

2 You can develop skills

Some people seem to be born with a green thumb, but, generally, gardening is a skill that is honed over time, and with different types of plants. When you plant a seed or seedling, you have a responsibility to tend it, if you want to see results. There's a sense of achievement that comes with watching something you've grown develop to its potential, particularly if you can enjoy blooms or fruit in later seasons. This is also beneficial for your self-confidence and self-discipline, because it takes work to bring a seed to its fruiting stage.



3**You'll boost your happy hormones**

It's well documented that greenery is beneficial for mental health, and, increasingly, psychiatric hospitals are finding ways to include green spaces in their buildings, or encouraging forest bathing. Research is also showing that when we dig our fingers in the dirt, we stir up natural microbes that stimulate the production of serotonin in the brain, resulting in positive emotions and reduced stress – at the same time lowering levels of cortisol, the stress hormone in the brain.

4**You'll improve your diet – and thereby your mental health**

When you grow your own fruit and vegetables, you make it easier for yourself to eat healthy, nutritious meals, which, in turn, will help to improve your mental health.

In a recent study conducted by Edith Cowan University in Australia, results indicated that, when individuals ate at least 470g of fruit and vegetables a day, they had lower levels of stress than those who consumed less than 230g.

According to lead researcher and PhD candidate Simone Radavelli-Bagatini, key nutrients could be a factor. “Vegetables and fruits contain important nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, flavonoids and carotenoids, that can reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, and therefore improve mental wellbeing,” she said.



5

You'll get exercise

Weeding, planting, watering and digging all require a significant amount of movement and physical exertion, which is good for the body. Exercise is also known to release endorphins, which reduce stress levels and result in positive emotions.

Takeaway

If space and money are deterrents in maintaining a garden, start with a small vertical garden or install pots on the windowsill. Allow yourself to be creative. Do some research and visit a nursery, where experts can help you to work with your space and budget.



If you or your loved one needs support during this time, reach out to your ICAS EHWP via your toll-free number or the ICAS On-the-Go App to seek counselling support.

Toll-free:

(from land and mobile phones)

Or request a call back: ***134*905#**

Company App Code:

Applicable to you and those who live under your roof

References:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/lifestyle/why-start-a-garden.htm>
<https://www.scienceworld.ca/stories/how-does-gardening-make-you-happier/>
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/05/210513100030.htm>