

How gardening will keep you well during the coronavirus pandemic

Being in nature has profound health benefits

- There is clearly a growing body of empirical evidence that reveals the value of experiencing nature for mental health, with a recent review highlighting the benefits of nature experience on cognitive functioning, emotional well-being, and other dimensions of mental health. ¹
- Research shows there are perceived and actual benefits to spending time in natural spaces compared to urban spaces, such as reduced mental fatigue, improved mood, and reduced stress. ²
- In one study, people who had walked in nature for 40 minutes, reported more positive emotions and less anger, compared with those walking in an urban area, or even sitting quietly listening to music. ³
- In the Netherlands, every 10% increase in area for exposure to green space translates to an improvement in health equivalent to being 5 years younger. ⁴
- In Canada, increased residential green space corresponded with decreased mortality over a 4-year period, particularly mortality associated with respiratory disease. ⁵
- In Japan, living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influenced longevity over a 5-year period. ⁶
- Individuals have both lower mental distress and higher well-being when living in urban areas with more green space. Participants in this study reported greater happiness and subjective wellbeing, highlighting the importance of policies that develop and protect urban green spaces for well-being. ⁷
- Green space provides learning and curative processes that contribute to a sense of meaning and purpose in life. ⁸
- Walking in nature, compared with walking in urban areas decreases anxiety, repetitive thought about distress and consequences (rumination), and negative emotions. ^{9,10}
- Nature experience has been associated with improved sleep, and this is particularly true for men and those over 65 years. ^{11,12}
- Our non-visual senses are also inspired by nature. Sound, smell, taste, touch, are all part of our appreciation of nature as measured by emotional and physiological mechanisms. ¹³



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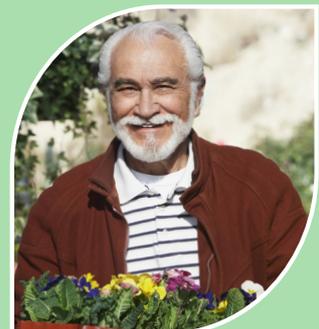
Gardening promotes health and happiness

Gardening promotes mental and physical health

- A regular dose of gardening can improve your health. Studies report a wide range of health outcomes, such as reductions in depression, anxiety, and body mass index, as well as increases in life satisfaction, quality of life, and sense of community. ¹⁴
- Gardening gives people a creative way to change their stress and frustration into something beautiful that offers comfort and joy. ¹⁵
- Reduced depression and anxiety result from 'active horticulture' (gardening), and emotional well-being and physical health are enhanced. ¹⁶
- Health benefits associated with exposure to and use of green spaces include long term reductions in heart disease, cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, and also reduced levels of obesity and higher self-rated mental health. ¹⁷
- Gardens are important to support recovery from illness. ¹⁷
- Gardening provides relief from 'problem solving' mental attention, shifting the mind to restorative, effortless attention. ^{15,16,17}
- Plants are more than just beautiful. Gardening has many benefits. The natural rhythms of a garden and of plants work as a counterpart against stress. There is silence and peace in the garden. A garden stimulates creativity and there is the satisfaction and pride in growing things. ¹⁸
- Gardens and gardening can represent an intimate connection with life itself, giving purpose and meaning to the elderly. ^{15,19}

Simply looking at greenery can be calming

- Looking at natural greenery is relaxing, not only during times of stress, also in the restoration phase following a stressful situation. ¹⁸
- Patients who can see nature and greenery, even through a window, have lower stress, better stimulation of the mind, and less of a focus on pain and discomfort. ²⁰
- Even a five-minute exposure to a natural scene, or simulation of one, reduces stress symptoms such as raised blood pressure, tensed-up muscles and increased sensitivity of the skin. ²¹
- Being able to see a view of diverse greenery from your home lowers the stress hormone cortisol and creates an improved sense of well-being. ^{22, 23}
- These benefits are particularly important for those who are not likely to seek interaction with nature, such as children and the elderly. ²⁴



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