

# Gardening for healthy ageing



## The benefits of gardening

Gardening has many benefits for older people. Garden beds, equipment, and easy to use tools can help you create a garden that is interesting and accessible. With some planning and thought, your garden can be a productive and pleasant space you can enjoy.

Healthy ageing is all about adopting a positive mindset. It focuses on independence and enjoying quality of life. Research has found that gardening can help you create this mindset.

Getting out in the garden helps you stay social while you exercise. Gardening is also a purposeful activity. This means it increases self-esteem, boosts creativity, and helps your brain stay healthy.

# More benefits of gardening

Other benefits of gardening include:

- Enjoying being active
- Improving your strength and endurance
- Reducing stress and boosting relaxation
- An opportunity to make new social connections
- Growing food and herbs can help you have a healthy diet.

## Improve your mental health

Gardening can help you improve your mental health.

Getting out in nature can soothe your nervous system, as well as distract you from problems, which can help you feel restored. Being busy in the garden helps you regulate your emotions and relieve stress.

Gardening challenges your brain too. Being creative by planning, designing, and choosing plants is great for brain health. Nurturing and caring for plants is also very rewarding.

## Improve your physical health

Gardens need regular and continuous care. This is a great way to increase your level of physical activity. Gardening activities that are good for your body include:

- Digging
- Watering
- Cutting
- Sweeping
- Carrying.

These activities contribute towards achieving the amount of physical activity and exercise recommended by the Department of Health and Aged Care.





## Make new friends

Garden groups and clubs offer a unique way for people to connect with nature and each other. People with different experiences from varied backgrounds often collaborate in these groups.

The benefits of a social group include:

- Connecting with others
- More social support
- Less isolation
- Boosting self-esteem
- Feeling less lonely.

# 10 tips for staying safe

1. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing including a hat, comfortable footwear, and gloves.
2. Extra caution is needed for individuals with fragile or thinning skin.
3. Attend to any cuts, bruises, or insect bites immediately.
4. Take care and follow safety precautions when using power tools.
5. Secure gates and fences if memory loss is an issue.
6. Ensure that paths and walkways are flat, non-slip, and cleared of trip hazards.
7. Keep a sturdy support near you if balance is an issue.
8. Take regular breaks and avoid sustained postures, like kneeling.
9. Prevent sun exposure by working in the garden early in the morning or later in the day.
10. Drink water to stay hydrated, especially in warm weather.





# Assistive products for gardening

Some gardening tasks can become difficult as we get older. This could be due to injury, a health condition, or general aches and pains.

Assistive products can help you with everyday gardening tasks and allow you to work in the garden independently.

Assistive products can be as simple as garden tools that have foam around the handles to make them larger and easier to grip.



## Helpful assistive products

There are lots of products available. Take the LiveUp quiz for more suggestions.

Products that can assist with limited mobility and allow wheelchair access include:

- Raised garden beds
- Vertical and wall gardens
- Retractable hanging baskets.

Products that help wrist or hand issues include:

- Long handle garden tools
- Easy grip garden tools.

# Where to find gardening groups

Gardening groups have members that meet on a regular basis to:

- Maintain and cultivate local food and herb gardens
- Attend group discussions or seminars
- Help maintain local community native natural habitats
- Promote fun and friendship.

Community Gardens Australia and Garden Clubs of Australia have lots of helpful information. Here you can find advice about gardening and finding a club or group in your local area.

## An occupational therapist can help you

An occupational therapist (OT) could help you get out in the garden more often.

An OT can help you develop personalised strategies. These strategies will allow you to do the things you enjoy, despite any barriers you might be facing. They can give you advice and suggest products so that you can start or continue gardening.

Visit Occupational Therapy Australia to find a practitioner in your local area.

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