



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



GARDENING FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL AND HEARING IMPAIRMENT

This information booklet looks at ways of using gardening activities to help you with your therapy if you have difficulty with vision and hearing. It is based on our experience of working with patients in Horticultural Therapy sessions who are:

Partially sighted, have visual field loss, visual agnosia (inability to recognize objects), visual neglect, are hard of hearing and/or wear a hearing aid.

It includes information on how different gardening activities may be beneficial therapeutically and practical advice on how to make gardening tasks easier.



Therapeutic
Benefits of
Seasonal
Horticultural Tasks

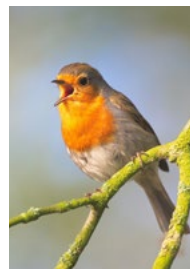
GARDENING FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL AND HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Therapeutic gardening activities

Being in nature – Finding a quiet, peaceful space outdoors can be a good way to reduce noise and distraction making it easier to focus. Being in a calm, relaxed environment is important to support with mental health and well-being. However, for people with a hearing impairment background noise may be amplified depending on the type of hearing aid worn. This may mean that noise such as wind, heaters in a greenhouse, even birds singing could be amplified. This can be tiring for a person with a hearing impairment so removing the hearing aid or even wearing ear plugs may be helpful for a short period to take a break from the noise.



Sensory planting – There are so many ways of learning about plants using the **different senses**. If you don't recognize a plant visually you may recognize the scent. If the colour doesn't prompt recognition maybe the shape of the plant does or even the sound or taste. Plants are very good at communicating information to help understand how best to look after them. For example, if plants need watering the leaves wilt. For patients who have a visual or hearing impairment using other senses such as touch, and scent can help with plant identification and maintenance. **Planting in rows or blocks** can make it easier to locate plants if you have a visual impairment. Having a **contrasting colour** between the path and border can also help to define planting spaces.



Scavenger hunts – Inspired by the Chelsea Physic Garden these can provide a more structured way of increasing awareness of your surroundings. We have developed several scavenger hunts each with a different focus using plants and objects in and around our therapeutic garden areas. This can be a good activity to practice visual scanning for people with visual field loss. Locating and identifying objects in the greenhouse required for a specific task such as garden tools is another way of practicing this.

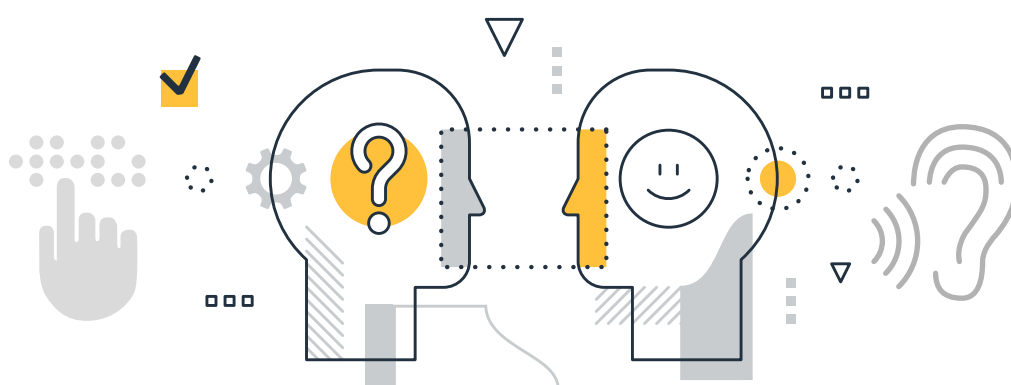
Adaptive techniques

Write things down so you do not have to retain so much information using tools such as diaries, notebooks, wall charts and calendars. There are a wide range of garden planners available to help plan and prompt you.

Use audio or visual prompts if writing lists or using words is more difficult. This could include audio recordings, pictures, photos, videos, or gestures. **Electronic devices** such as mobile phones, smart watches or I-pads are a great way to do this.



Keep people informed about your individual communication needs and coping strategies. For the hearing impaired this could be closer positioning in a room or space, being face to face, presenting information more visually and considering your rate and volume of speech. For the visually impaired this could be requesting written information is in large print or braille, labelling equipment (clear or large print, tactile, audio or braille labels) or providing information verbally.



Pace activities – To avoid fatiguing too quickly intersperse repetitive tasks with short rest breaks or ensure that you take a steadier pace to help conserve your energy.

Complete tasks in stages so you do not feel too overwhelmed by trying to remember lots of information in one go.



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See differently –
Labelling
RNIB

Organise your environment – Consider what equipment and plant material you will need before an activity and to clear up afterwards. Have everything you will need to hand so it is easier to focus on the task. Keeping an area clutter free will reduce the risk of slips and trips.

Give yourself time – the pleasure of gardening is in letting things evolve and grow naturally, there is no need to rush.

Adaptive tools

Consider adjusting **brightness and font size** to devices such as **smart phones and tablets**

Plant labels – It's good practice to label plants with the name, variety and date if grown from seed which also provides a useful prompt. Use a larger size label with big bold writing on a contrasting background to make it easier to see. Braille or audio labels can also be useful alternatives.



See differently –
Gardening.
RNIB



Gardening for blind or partially sighted people, information and advice, visually impaired gardeners. carryongardening.org.uk

Use **lightweight gardening gloves** for extra dexterity.

Consider **gardening tools** with a **bright tool handle** to identify them more easily.

Tools such as right-angle guides, cut and hold secateurs and one-handed shears can support gardening tasks for the visually impaired. The Thrive website is a useful resource providing information and equipment.

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