



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



GARDENING FOR PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

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

**Verbal communication (Spoken & Written),
Understanding language, Expressing language,
Non-verbal communication, and Social
communication.**



Therapeutic
Benefits of
Seasonal
Horticultural Tasks

GARDENING FOR PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES



Get growing
– how to get
started with
gardening.

RHS Gardening

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 can support with the emotional impact of managing a communication difficulty.



Gardening for
Beginners.

BBC Gardeners'
World Magazine

Community Gardening – Gardening can be done individually or as part of a group such as a gardening club or community allotment project. It offers the opportunity to connect and communicate with others by sharing an interest, advice, seeds or produce. Being involved in a group project can promote teamwork and a chance to interact with others. Examples of projects we have done as a group include workshops on wreath making and pumpkin carving, building a border garden for a show, fruit tree pruning in a community orchard and running a farm shop.



Gardening for all levels –The garden offers a wealth of opportunity to support with and practice communication skills. It is constantly evolving so there is always something new or different which can serve as a talking point. This is balanced with that which is familiar for the more experienced gardener or with what will become familiar through practice and repetition for the novice gardener.

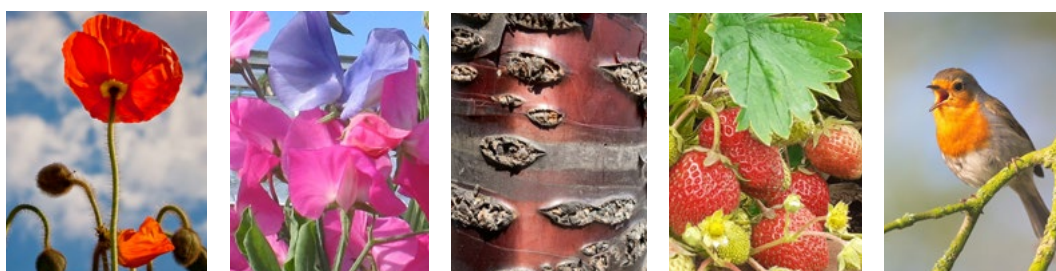
There are activities to suit all levels of ability and experience. From sowing a few seeds in a pot indoors to planting and planning a border or managing an allotment or larger garden. There are endless ways of engaging with gardening in a way that meets your needs. You can keep it simple and as tasks become more familiar it may enable you to use these as building blocks to work on a bigger task or project. You can always go back to the first building block if it feels overwhelming. This is a good way to balance learning new tasks with repetition of tasks that are familiar.



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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 too to help understand how best to look after them. For example, if plants need watering the leaves wilt. For patients who have difficulty with comprehending and speaking language using other senses such as touch, and sight has helped with learning new horticultural tasks and enabled independence with these tasks despite other barriers to communication.



How to guides.
HighGround

Being creative: Gardening provides many ways to express yourself creatively from planning and designing a container, border or whole garden, to cooking produce to seasonal crafts.



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.



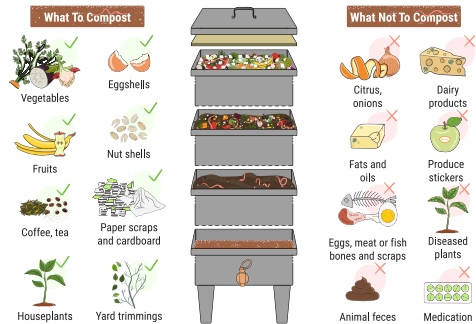
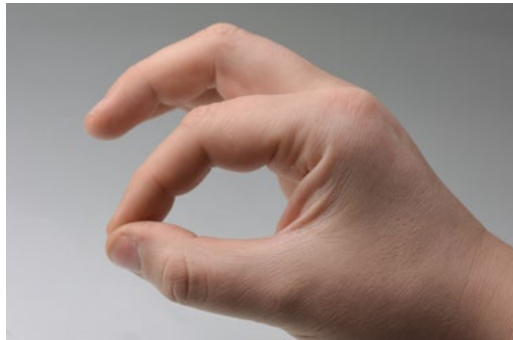
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Grow Your Own app.

RHS Gardening a useful app providing advice, alerts, reminders, and space for you to make your own notes.

Ask people to use your preferred non-verbal methods of communication such as gestures, drawings, simple writing.



10 of the Best Free Garden Planners Available Online.

Garden and Happy examples of different garden planners.

Ask someone who knows you and your communication strategies to support you if you are working with someone new for the first time.



Ask for words to be **rephrased** or **repeated** when you don't understand.

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.



Sowing Seeds - Thrive.

Useful prompt for step-by-step instruction in words and pictures or make your own version.

Organise your environment – Consider what equipment and plant material you will need before an activity and to clear up afterwards, make a note of this as above. Have everything you will need to hand so it is easier to focus on the task.

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

Adaptive tools

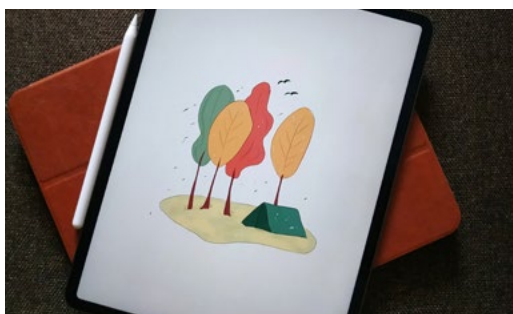
Communication Aids may be helpful. These could be low-tech options (e.g. alphabet boards and picture charts) or high-tech aids (e.g. dedicated communication devices, computer-based systems and amplifiers).

Plant labels – It's good practice to label plants with the name, variety and date if grown from seed but this also provides a useful prompt. If writing is difficult buy a larger size label to provide more space.



Coping with communication problems after brain injury.

Headway



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