



ADAPTED GARDENING ACTIVITIES



GARDENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This information booklet looks at ways of using gardening activities to help with your mental health and wellbeing. It is based on our experience of working with patients in Horticultural Therapy sessions who may have difficulty with:

Low mood, anxiety, reduced confidence, stress, PTSD, pain, living with a long-term health condition.



Therapeutic
Benefits of
Seasonal
Horticultural Tasks

GARDENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

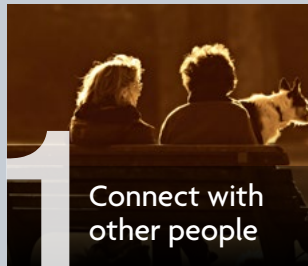


Mental Health Awareness Week 2021 – Mental Health UK

Mental Health Awareness Week

It was mental health awareness week during May which encouraged us to engage in the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' with a theme of reconnecting to nature.

The '5 Ways to Wellbeing' are a set of pillars which are key to improving our mental health. Modelled by the New Economics Foundation, they're geared around themes of social connectedness, physical activity, awareness, learning, and giving.



Gardening can be a helpful way to work with the 5 ways to well-being and support recovery. Gardening gives us hope. The cycle of the seasons continues bringing with it the possibility of change and renewal.

The joy and satisfaction of seeing plants you have nurtured grow and be productive can provide a sense of purpose and have a positive impact on our self-esteem and confidence.



National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd.
NSALG



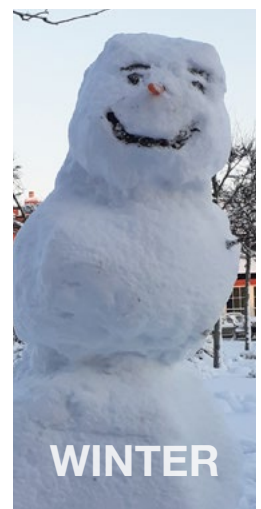
SPRING



SUMMER



AUTUMN



WINTER



Social Farms & Gardens.



Work in our
gardens.
National Trust

Gardening Activities

Social Connection

Although gardening can be a solitary activity equally it can be something to share with and gain support from others. Be it working with friends, family, or neighbours to help maintain a garden or share gardening tips and produce. Being involved in a local community garden or an allotment is another way of working alongside others with a shared interest. Local councils can be a good way to explore projects in your area. The websites listed opposite have useful resources and information to help you get started.



Volunteer in your
community.
RHS Gardening

Volunteering in a garden as part of team maybe another way to meet new people and connect with others. Organisations such as The National Trust, the Royal Horticultural Society and the Woodland trust are all offer volunteering opportunities throughout the UK but it always worth checking in your local area for opportunities.



Volunteer With Us.
Woodland Trust

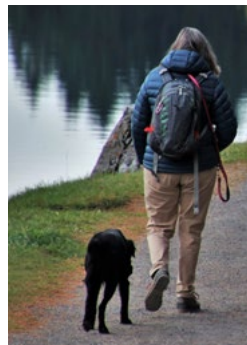


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Being physically active

Gardening is a great way of staying physically active and is known to reduce rates of depression and anxiety. Being physically healthy and active can support our mental health, improve concentration, and aid better sleep. Exercise can help your body to release 'good hormones,' or endorphins which improve mood.

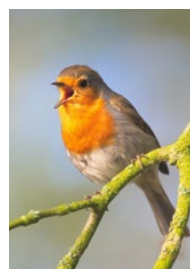
There are such a wide variety of activities so there is always something to suit all levels of fitness and mobility. From moderate intensity tasks such as digging, raking, and turning compost to tasks which are less energetic such as seed sowing and pricking out seedlings. Taking a gentle walk outdoors in nature with opportunity to take in your surroundings can be a way to actively relax. Growing your own seasonal produce can also be a great incentive to cultivate healthy eating habits.



Awareness

Just being present in nature provides a calming and restful way to stimulate the senses through colour, scent, texture, taste, and sound.

This constantly evolves throughout the seasons so there is always something new of interest: the vibrant colour of a poppy, the fragrant scent of a sweet pea, the feel of the bark on a tree, the taste of fresh strawberries or the sound of birdsong. This can be a helpful way to ground yourself if you are feeling anxious, lift your mood or distract yourself from pain and worrying thoughts.



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Scavenger Hunts.
Chelsea Physic Garden.

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 helpful to practice mindfulness.



Get growing – how to get started with gardening.
RHS Gardening.

Learning new skills

Whether you are new to gardening or a more experienced 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 and offers a variety of choices. 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. No matter how long you have been gardening there is always something new to learn.

Developing your own green space enables you to be creative and put your own stamp on it. Using natural objects grown or foraged for creative projects such as making a seasonal wreath, braiding garlic or making a mini bug hotel is another way of learning new skills.



Gardening for Beginners.
BBC Gardeners' World Magazine



How to guides.
HighGround

Giving

This could mean giving your knowledge, time, skills, physical or moral support to help others cultivate their own green space. Whether assisting an individual or local group this can be a rewarding way to give support to the wider community and environment.

Growing produce, plants or saving seeds to give to others. Sharing ideas for recipes, craft projects or handy hints for growing. There are many ways to use horticulture as a means of giving back.

Evidence suggests that 'giving back' or helping others promotes wellbeing for all ages.

Mental Health UK 2021



GARDENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Adaptive techniques

Look all around you for inspiration and ideas

From other gardens to pictures in magazines or online.

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. Be aware of times of the day when you feel more energetic and direct your activities accordingly.

Start small and complete tasks in stages

So you do not feel too overwhelmed.

Bring nature indoors

If it is too difficult to go outdoors grow houseplants or herbs on your windowsill.

Write things down

If concentrating and retaining information is difficult. Use 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, such as audio recordings, pictures, photos, or videos. Electronic devices such as mobile phones, smart watches or I-pads are a great way to do this.

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.

Give yourself time

The pleasure of gardening is in letting things evolve and grow naturally, there is no need to rush.



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Mental Health
Awareness
Week 2021.
Mental Health UK



Thriving With
Nature.
Mental Health
Foundation



How nature
benefits mental
health.
Mind, the mental
health charity –
help for mental
health problems

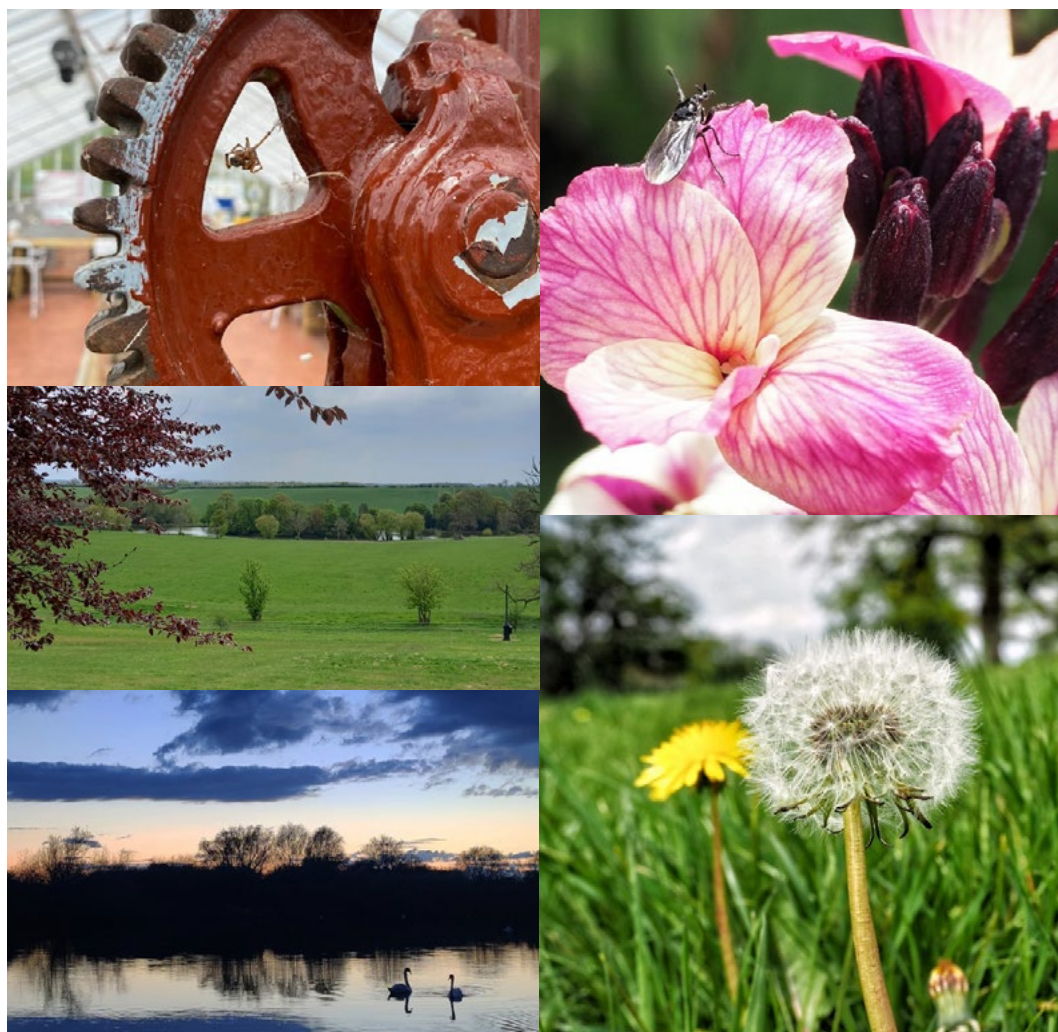


Why gardening
is good for
your mental
wellbeing.
Thrive

Adaptive tools

The links on the left are useful tools providing advice and information on how nature can benefit our mental health.

The images below were all taken by staff members from the DMRC who participated in a photo scavenger hunt as part of a mindfulness exercise for mental health awareness week.



Written by Jane Taylor, Horticultural Therapist at DMRC Stanford Hall.
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Visit our website to find out more: www.highground-uk.org

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