



## Surprising Health Benefits of Gardening

The health benefits of outdoor gardening, including backyard gardening and community gardening, range from increased nutrients in your diet to staving off chronic diseases. So if you've been living life with a little voice in your head whispering, 'Psst.... You should start a garden,' it's for good reason. Here are 7 surprising health benefits of gardening.

### 1. Home Grown Self-Esteem

Maybe you're someone who has always felt his or her thumb to be conspicuously not-green. After tilling, planting, nurturing and harvesting plants, you might see a slightly different person in the mirror. A person who can grow things. A person a little more in tune with the earth. A gardener, whose thumb does seem to emit a shade of green after all! It always feels good to accomplish new tasks, and if you can grow a garden, what can't you do?

### 2. Gardening for Heart Health

You're burning calories and strengthening your heart when you're out in the garden. You do know that, right? According many health experts, activities such as gardening, do-it-yourself projects and housework may be as good as formal exercise when it comes to reducing the risk for heart attack and stroke. Heart health: Now that's quite a bonus.

### 3. Gardening Reduces Stress

A Dutch study asked two groups of people to complete a stressful task and concluded that gardening for 30 minutes after said task resulted in lower cortisol levels. Cortisol is the hormone associated with stress. Had a rough day? Get in your garden and let the stress melt away. Stress is a HUGE health risk, so this benefit of gardening is a big deal.

### 4. Happiness in the Dirt

How does a dynamic, beautiful landscape that you know intimately, that you are in fact responsible for creating, make you feel? Probably pretty happy. There's also a scientific reason that gardening makes you happy. Studies suggest that inhaling *M.vacciae*, healthy bacteria that lives in soil, can increase levels of serotonin and reduce anxiety. According to experts 'you get a dose of *M. vacciae* just by taking a walk in the wild or rooting around in the garden and this could help elicit a jolly state of mind.

### 5. You'll Sleep Better

Research at the University of Pennsylvania suggests that the light activity associated with gardening can help you sleep better at night. Sleep is so vital to good health; this is a benefit you shouldn't ignore.

### 6. Improved Hand Strength

Using your hands helps to retain coordination, strength and more. All that digging, planting, and pulling does more than produce plants. Gardening activities will increase your hand strength. What a great way to keep your hands and fingers as strong as possible for as long as possible.

### 7. Gardening for Family Health

Gardening can be a solo activity, or an opportunity for bonding with your family and friends. The happiness and stress relief that gardening provides is a great thing to share with loved ones. Also, gardening has special benefits for kids. Early exposure to dirt has been linked to all kinds of long-term health benefits, from reducing allergies to autoimmune diseases.

Spring is coming and now is the perfect time to start planning your garden.

Sources: <https://healthtalk.unhealthcare.org/health-benefits-of-gardening/>

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