

Wellness Benefits of Gardens

By Peggy Swarbrick

During the past few weeks when I was talking to various friends and colleagues on the phone, I was so surprised how many shared that they had just been gardening and felt so *great*. It was delightful to be engaged in such a positive conversation focused on their morning or afternoon gardening activities. It seemed that, for all of them, tending to their flower and vegetable gardens was deeply rewarding. They even discussed weeding in a favorable way, which was striking to me!

These conversations had an impression on me because they are connected to me in different ways, but all showed the same enthusiasm and excitement. Considering the challenges so many are experiencing now, it was refreshing to hear the joy my friends shared about their love of gardening.

I know the therapeutic benefits of horticulture programs from working in a greenhouse program when I was an occupational therapist assistant and how many of the people I had worked with came alive in the greenhouse program, regardless of the type and severity of their symptoms and challenges.



Not only can gardening be effective for physical wellness, it can also benefit many other wellness dimensions too. We have included some benefits for the eight dimensions and encourage you to identify more!

Physical wellness improves with physical activity and good food—gardens supply both. Add a few stretches throughout the gardening day to work out any kinks you may develop.

Emotional wellness can be strengthened with fresh air, sunshine, and a sense of accomplishment, which are accessed by working in the garden.

Intellectual wellness comes from planning the garden and learning about different plants and their different needs for sun, water, and soil.

Social wellness can be enhanced by working in community garden spaces, but also by sharing your experiences with other gardeners and sharing tomatoes or zucchini with friends.

Occupational wellness is more than working at a paid job. It includes having meaningful and purposeful activity guide your days. Even what seems like drudgery (weeding) can be pleasant.

Financial wellness can get a boost from growing your own herbs, fruits, and vegetables, especially compared to the cost of traveling to the store to purchase produce.

Spiritual wellness can be enriched, too, by witnessing the miracle of a seed unfolding into a plant and a flower turning its face to the sun.

Environmental wellness is obvious as the spaces where flowers, herbs, and food are growing include an array of colors and smells that are visually and emotionally appealing.

Gardening Year-Round

Spring, summer, and fall seem to be the times people are engaged in outdoor gardening activities. Many also enjoy gardening through potted plants indoors. There are many varieties of houseplants, including some that require little or no care. If you don't have a sunny window, some plants can manage under a regular table lamp, especially if you use a full-spectrum light bulb.

Another indoor gardening option is a small windowsill herb garden. You can start these from seed, use a seed-starting kit, or purchase small pots of herbs from a grocery or garden shop.

Do you know about microgreens? You may have tried different kinds of sprouts on a sandwich at a health food store. You can grow your own at home using simple low-cost materials—even just paper towels and a recycled plastic box from salad greens. Get special microgreen seeds from most big seed catalog companies or maybe your local hardware or garden supply store or try sprouting lentils or other seeds and beans from the grocery.



**An automatic alarm, Turns my radio on
Before my feet can hit the floor,
The music's got me ready to go
And all through the whole day, I know
My favorite records they'll play
It helps me chase all my blues away!**

-Edwin Starr

The Healing Power of Music

Music has a way of opening our hearts and helping us feel more connected to others, to ourselves, and to the world around us. As a result, it is a direct line to our emotions and well-being.

Today, people are finding music comforting, energizing, and inspiring, as they listen to old favorites, dance numbers, kids' sing-along songs, and new touching tunes about the pandemic (the new Alicia Keyes tune "Good Job" will touch your heart for sure).

"If there were no music, then I would not get through..."
--Shawn Colvin

Many use music to manage moods to accompany them through their daily activities. We select music to listen to based on how we feel and on how we would like to feel. We make musical choices to help us wake up, relax, or to shut out sounds when we need to concentrate.

Take a few moments to consider the following questions about how music fits in your life today.

- What role does music play for your wellness, especially right now?
- How does music make you feel?
- How does music help change how you feel?

References and Resources

Illustrations are from pixabay.com

For more on gardening, check your state's cooperative extension service.

To learn about microgreens, see YouTube or start here: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/gardening/a20705635/growing-microgreens/> and follow these safety tips: <https://foodandnutrition.org/blogs/stone-soup/7-tips-growing-safe-sprouted-grains/>

You can find Edwin Starr singing his 1979 tune H.A.P.P.Y. Radio on several YouTube postings.