



5 Secret Health Benefits of Gardening

Working in dirt boosts mood, lowers dementia risk

by Kim Hayes, 2017

Gardening offers opportunities for physical activity and, in the case of community gardens, socialization.

In addition to providing nutritious veggies and fruits for your dinner table and beautiful flowers to decorate it, gardening offers a variety of health benefits.

Exposure to vitamin D

Vitamin D increases your calcium levels, which benefits your bones and immune system. A 2014 Italian study, published on the National Institutes of Health website, found that exposure to sunlight helped older adults achieve adequate serum vitamin D levels. So outdoor activities like gardening are a perfect way to get your sunshine while pursuing a fun hobby. (But don't forget the sunscreen to protect your skin, and sunglasses for your eyes.)

Decreased dementia risk

A 2006 study found that gardening could lower risk of dementia by 36 percent. Researchers tracked more than 2,800 people over the age of 60 for 16 years and concluded that physical activity, particularly gardening, could reduce the incidence of dementia in future years.

Mood-boosting benefits

A study in the Netherlands suggests that gardening fights stress even better than other hobbies. Participants completed a stressful task and were then told to read inside or go outdoors and garden for 30 minutes. The gardening group reported better moods afterward, and their blood tests showed lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Enjoyable aerobic exercise

Gardening is a great form of aerobic exercise; plus, you might become so engrossed in your work that you don't even realize you're breaking a sweat. Pulling weeds, reaching for various plants and tools, and twisting and bending as you plant will work new muscles in your body and help with strength, stamina, and flexibility.

Helps combat loneliness

After retirement, many people struggle with fewer socialization opportunities, and allotmenting can be a fun way to engage with others while providing benefits to neighbourhoods.