

The added benefits of gardening



Whether you're just getting started or have plenty of experience growing, sowing seeds and nurturing plants has a massive range of benefits.

It's good for you

In 2022, a **UK pilot** of 'green' prescriptions – prescribing spending time in nature – found that the more natural space there is around someone's home, the better their health. It also found that nature provides exposure to important and diverse microbes which help to regulate the immune system.

It builds confidence

Whether it's harvesting your first vegetable grown from seed or successfully caring for a house plant, nurturing a living thing is fun. It provides a low-risk way to follow your instincts, try something new and build new skills – all great self-esteem boosters.

It's a great way to soak up Vitamin D

Vitamin D, which is created by your body from sunlight on skin, helps your body to absorb calcium and phosphate, both essential for strong bones. It also supports the immune system, teeth and muscles. Whilst soaking up valuable vitamin D and being in outside is good for us in many ways, spending too much time in the sunshine can be dangerous. Remember to wear sun cream, a sun hat and drink plenty of water.



It's a fun way to exercise

From turning over soil to carrying a heavy watering can, when you're busy gardening you're usually exercising too! Regular physical activity is great for health and it's easier to fit it in when you're also doing something you love. Gardening uses all the major muscle groups and can improve your mobility and endurance – just make sure you warm up ahead of time and don't overexert yourself.



It's a mental health booster

A **Swedish study** found that access to green space can reduce stress, even if that's just spending some time on a balcony. Not only is spending time in nature a great mood booster, but getting involved with nature by digging through soil or harvesting home-grown veg can foster a deeper connection to the natural world.

Are you feeling inspired to get growing? We believe anyone who wants to grow can do so, and our free Plant and Share toolkit is full of resources and activity packs to help anyone get started. We've covered getting your growing space ready, growing no matter how much space you have, how to get your community together to grow and much more.

What will you be growing? We'd love to hear your growing plans! Let us know by tagging **@SAFoodforLife** or by registering your Plant and Share activity with us.

It connects you to others

Growing with others, whether your community, family or school friends, is another way to feel good. In 2022, **Mind** found that over 7 million people had benefitted from connecting with people outdoors, even if just chatting to neighbours over the garden fence.



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