



Managing Stress with Gardening

According to Penn State University, studies indicate one out of every three people garden. And there is a good reason. Gardening can be enjoyed inside or outside, and it can help improve our mental health by lowering stress levels and increasing positive feelings.

Kayla Oaster, Master Gardener at Penn State, points out that there are multiple psychological benefits to gardening. The most important one is that it connects us with nature. Working with plants – digging through the soil, feeling varying textures, and seeing the different shapes and colors of the plants – helps to feel more grounded and relaxed. It can help connect to the current moment and stay present in the activity. Oaster also notes that studies show that having a garden can decrease fatigue and increase motivation and confidence. Having houseplants or a terrarium provides similar benefits in developing a routine and the confidence to care for plants. According to [Thrive.org](https://www.thrive.org), gardening helps in the release of serotonin and endorphins, the body's natural "feel good" emotions. People who garden also tend to be stronger physically and happier emotionally.

Lisa Wimmer, APRN, C.N.P., D.N.P. of the [Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org) notes that there are social benefits to gardening as well. Friendships can develop with fellow gardeners, having conversations and opening the opportunity for social activities when time permits. If gardening sounds like a hobby you would like to try, Wimmer has the following tips:

- Start small-Whether gardening outside or taking on houseplants or making a terrarium. Do not buy too much to start.

- Build Connections-Seek others who may be interested in gardening as well.
- Research-Only buy what you can care for depending on your situation.
- Gardening or planting should be a source of joy. Don't force yourself if it is not a good fit for you.

Gardening is a wonderful way to be a steward for the planet and to help improve your mental health.