



The Facts about...

Gardening for Health

How Can Gardening Help Older People Stay Healthy?

Gardening;

- Is an enjoyable form of exercise
- Increases levels of physical activity and helps mobility and flexibility
- Encourages use of all motor skills
- Improves endurance and strength
- Helps prevent diseases such as osteoporosis
- Reduces stress levels and promotes relaxation
- Provides stimulation and an interest in nature and the outdoors
- Improves wellbeing as a result of social interaction
- Can provide nutritious, home-grown produce.

Garden Design for Older People

- A garden for older people needs to be structured to allow access with a walker, frame or wheelchair.
- **Paths** should be flat and level.
- **Raised beds** make it easier to tend to plants than if they are planted at ground level.
- Make sure that there are **places to sit and rest** (perhaps near a scented jasmine or rose).
- Choosing **low-maintenance plants**, using **mulch** to reduce the need for weeding and installing an **irrigation system** are all ways of keeping gardening duties to a manageable level.

Low-Maintenance Planting

A low-maintenance planting scheme might include slow-growing evergreens to give structure and year-round interest (Viburnum Tinus, Philadelphus Belle Etoile, Choisya Ternata).

Ground cover plants such as Vinca Minor or Lamium Maculatum can help to reduce weeding. Nepeta Fassenii provides constant colour throughout the Spring and Summer and is a manageable size; it looks lovely combined with a perennial geranium, such as Wargraves's Pink.

Staying Safe in the Garden

Before setting out down the garden path, remember that the following age-related issues should be considered and steps taken to manage them where applicable.

- Thinning skin makes older people more susceptible to bumps, bruises and sunburn.
- Changes in the eye lens structure, loss of peripheral vision and generally poorer eyesight may restrict activities
- Older people are more susceptible to temperature changes and have a greater tendency to dehydrate or suffer from heat exhaustion
- Mental health, thinking and memory abilities may be affected by dementia and similar conditions, so supervision may be needed
- Balance is often not as good, so precautions against falls should be taken

Further Information and Useful Contacts

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) website has a section that deals with gardening for the disabled or elderly - www.rhs.org.uk

Thrive is a national charity that helps people with a disability to start or continue gardening - <http://www.thrive.org.uk/>

Gardening for the Disabled Trust gives grants to people all over the United Kingdom in order that they may continue to garden, despite disability or advancing illness. A person of any age can apply; it is their love of gardening that counts! <https://gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk/>

<http://www.chillingtontoolsonline.co.uk/> offer a range of tools with foam cushion grips and extendable handles

To contact Share and Care Homeshare:

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This fact sheet should only be used as a guideline and we recommend you seek professional advice.