

GARDENING FOR MIND, BODY AND SOUL

How to Nurture Your Well-Being with Nature

ANNIE BURDICK

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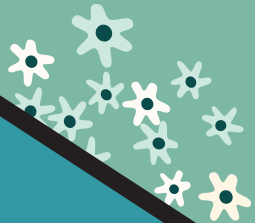
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TAKE YOUR

workout outside

So, you've managed to get all the exercise you can out of your garden. Maybe it's mid-season and there is less digging, raking and planting to do, so the aerobic tasks are a bit slim at the moment. That certainly doesn't mean you have to stop striving toward those goals for better endurance, flexibility, muscle tone, and so on, even in the confines of the garden! Try repurposing your outdoor space as a workout area and see if your motivation improves.

Bring your exercise supplies outside, whether that means a yoga mat, weights, jump rope or just a laptop playing a workout routine. Find a nice calm spot in your garden with some stable ground, perhaps near your flowers or other plantings, close to a pleasant-sounding fountain or wind-chime, in a place where you know you'll see some birds or butterflies or wherever smells the best.



GARDENING AND YOUR SENSES

smell

The effects and benefits of scents

Incredibly, most humans can distinguish between billions of different scents, and gardening offers a delightful array of them to explore. This ability seems to have developed in early humans for mainly practical purposes, allowing us to sense dangers to our health and safety (smelling smoke from a fire or the bad odour of expired food, for example), but the ability to smell has a wide range of effects on our emotions, health and how we perceive the world. Here are a few effects of your sense of smell you may never consider:

- Smell is a huge factor in enhancing taste!
- Smell is intertwined with memory, and can often conjure memories, good and bad.
- Scents have been shown to affect mood and soothe emotions, through the power of aromatherapy.
- Smell can help you make impressions about people, places or situations.
- Smell can affect productivity and focus.
- Scents can affect your perception of time.



WORK EVERY MUSCLE

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As you bend over to dig into the ground and make space for a new plant, you'll feel the muscles in your back working hard. As you yank at a tough weed, you'll feel the effort up and down your arms. Pushing a mower around your patch of grass engages those key core muscles, aside from your biceps and triceps. Carrying a bucket of water, you can feel it working your forearms. When you bend or crouch to pull weeds, you can feel your hamstrings and glutes getting a stretch. Building up stronger muscles is a key health and physical wellness goal – and, yes, your so-called relaxing gardening hobby is coming into play there too.

SCENTED PLANTS FOR

you and your garden

Knowing the basic benefits of smell, it's time to dive into some of the best plants to grow in your garden to reap those pleasant-scent benefits, whether it's reliving positive memories, feeling more emotionally calm and happy, or gaining a bit of productivity and focus. These are just a few plants from an array of options to bring lovely scents into your garden.

Flowering plants by sensory effect

Calming profile:

Lilac, Lavender, Gardenia, Night scented stock, Tuberose

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Energizing profile:

Lily of the valley, Freesia, Apple blossom, Honeysuckle, Mock orange, Geranium

Heady profile:

Rose, Sweet pea, Jasmine, Wisteria, Nicotiana, Peony

Refreshing profile:

Magnolia, Daphne, Hibiscus, Lotus, Litsea

Plants with dried seed pods

Another wonderful option for sound-based planting is selecting plants that dry out substantially during the year, leaving their dried stems and seed pods lingering and producing lovely auditory effects with each passing breeze. Plants like *Nigella damascena*, eucalyptus, or honesty (*Lunaria annua*) are all beautiful year round, fluctuating between thriving leaves and flowers, and starkly beautiful dried iterations as the seasons change.



PRESSING FLOWERS FROM *your own bounty*

Like many, I have fond memories of gathering beautiful blooms I came across as a child and pressing them in heavy books, sometimes returning to them weeks later and turning them into art projects. Pressing flowers is a great way to:

- Give the beautiful blooms of your garden a second life before they wilt on their own
- Get creative and make something
- Show appreciation for the stunning qualities of nature
- Form a deeper connection with your garden and experience a new tactile sensory experience.

How to press flowers

1. Start by selecting the flowers you're going to press. Choose the fullest and best blooms on the plant for the best results. Collecting in the morning when flowers are in full bloom helps. The type of flower can also make a difference. Smaller flowers with simple petals or flat faces press well, while very large blooms will be tough to press unless you separate and press individual petals.
2. Make sure the flowers are dry by dabbing with a soft towel, or wait for them to lose their morning dew after picking, if needed.

A FRESH, VIBRANT SALAD, *right from the garden*

My grandmother was an amazing cook, something I'm sure many can relate to. She had a salad recipe that has long been legend in my family (it's one of the few tastes I can always conjure in my mind, it's such a powerful memory). A unique mix of flavours, it's packed with great veggies, is rich and filling enough to be a main dish, and is the perfect outlet to use some of your best garden bounties like tomatoes, greens, onions and herbs.

ROAST BEEF AND TOSSED GREENS SALAD WITH CREAMY HERB DRESSING

You will need:

1 head romaine lettuce (or other lettuce), shredded
or about 170 g (6 oz) fresh garden artichoke hearts

125 g (4½ oz) cherry tomatoes, sliced

85 g (3 oz) pitted black olives

Half a medium red onion, sliced

1 small bunch watercress or other fresh
garden greens of your choice

225 g (8 oz) cooked deli roast beef, cut into pieces

225 g (8 oz) provolone cheese, cut into cubes

Handful of sesame breadsticks, broken into pieces

For the dressing:

1 clove garlic

60 ml (2 fl oz) mayonnaise

SOWING HOPEFULNESS AND LOVE

Hopefulness is one of the purest feelings we have. It's so natural and hard to force or predict, springing up as an honest reaction to something we hear or experience. That's what makes hope wonderful, the honesty and vulnerability of it. That we can see someone do something kind or compassionate, or hear about something life-changing and suddenly be shot through with this glorious, weightless feeling of hope.

Let your garden be a source of hope too. By putting your heart and energy into trees, plants, perhaps even things like ponds or bird feeders, you're sowing a bit of hopefulness that something beautiful will come of it in the future. When you plant a sapling, you're putting hope into its chance of becoming a powerful, life-giving tree one day. There is so much beauty in that.

Love, too, is a pure and beautiful thing to feel and express. Showing love to the natural world is so valuable, and your garden is one of your best outlets for doing so, a place where you can make the choices that the planet will thank you for, and act with gentleness and love with each moment.

The thing about nature, and your garden, is that the more love you pour into it, the more you're able to receive in return. There are no conditions or boundaries to love, besides your willingness. Bathe your plants in love and devotion. Feel genuine hope and joy looking at them. You'll be surprised and pleased by the results.