

The beginner's guide to
**gardening and why it can be
good for your wellbeing**



Gardening is one of those hobbies that almost everyone can take part in and enjoy. Whether you're working with a large open space or a small window box, there's a way for you to start gardening.

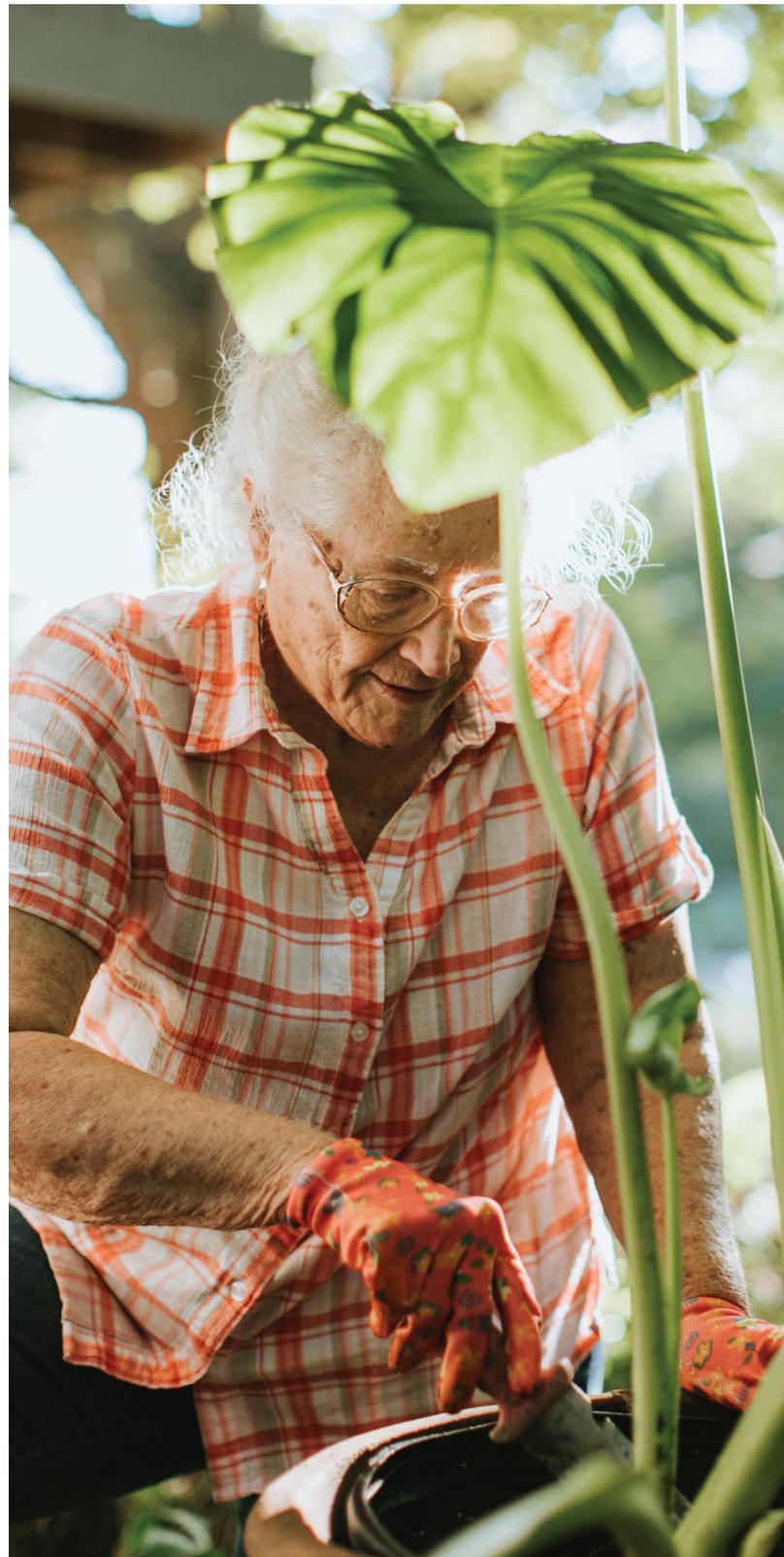
Why start gardening?

At its most basic, gardening allows us to connect with nature and – if gardening outside – get more fresh air and sunshine.

It's a relatively simple form of exercise that can help to build strength and encourage better physical health almost without you even realising it. It has also been suggested that gardening can help to improve bone density, too.

The act of planting your garden and tending to it uses a range of motor skills and can help to relieve stress. Plus, it offers you a routine and a sense of achievement as you can literally see or reap the fruits of your labours.

If you have an allotment or can help in a community garden, it can help you connect with other people. Loneliness is a big problem for us all and helping in communal gardens can help to improve communication and social skills regardless of age. You can find out if there's a community garden near you on [the RHS website](#).



How to get started?

The first thing you need to consider is how much time and energy you can commit to gardening as this will help decide what kind of gardening you could do. If you only have five minutes a day to spare, then a small window box or planter could be a great option as you'll have enough time to water it and tend to any small weeds that potentially crop up. If you have more time, energy, and space then you can be more adventurous with your plans.



Think about your physical abilities; will bending over low beds cause you problems? Can you safely operate a lawnmower? You may need to scale down your plans or get some specialist gardening tools to help if mobility is an issue for you.

From there, choose a convenient spot where you want to grow your plants. It could be your garden, an allotment, a plant box on your balcony or some plant pots on your windowsill.

Decide what you'd like to achieve. Are you looking to plant a beautiful flower garden? Or perhaps you'd like to try growing your own vegetables?

Now you've thought about how much time you can commit, what you can do, where you want to garden, and what you want to achieve, it's time to throw yourself into it and get started!



Easiest fruits and vegetables to grow

While you're deciding what you'd like to grow, here are some ideas to get you started. These are some of the easiest fruits and vegetables to grow (this isn't an exhaustive list):

In a garden or allotment

- Salad leaves like rocket or spinach
- Spring onions
- Herbs like oregano, thyme or rosemary (be careful with mint as it likes to spread everywhere!)
- Radishes
- Peas
- Potatoes
- Beetroot
- Strawberries and raspberries – although these will need covering with netting to protect them from the birds

In a greenhouse

- Tomatoes
- Chilli peppers
- Cucumbers
- Peppers
- Squash
- Citrus fruits
- Strawberries

Tips and tools for gardening to help older or disabled adults

If you have issues with strength or mobility it doesn't have to mean that gardening is off-limits. There are a variety of adaptations you can make or tools you can consider to help you create the garden of your dreams.

Struggle with bending or want to do the gardening sitting in a chair or wheelchair?

You could try using raised beds or containers. These bring the plants up higher, so you don't need to get down to the ground or bend over while tending to them.



Get aids to help if you're weeding or pruning lower beds

Find knee pads to wear or a [garden kneeler](#) to help protect your knees from the hard ground (and any rocks, stones, spikey plants or twigs that might be hiding in the grass). You can also [get kneelers that come with support arms](#) to make it easier to get up again.

Do you have limited mobility?

Vertical beds or wall and trellis spaces could be a great option for you. Alternatively, a small window box may be easier to manage.



Try to keep good posture

Having the right posture when gardening can make all the difference. [The Easi-Grip range](#) of gardening tools can help to keep your hand and wrist naturally aligned for increased comfort. The longer handles on some of the tools also help to reduce the amount you have to bend.



Don't stay in the sun all the time

Make sure you have a shaded area to work in on sunny days or a [portable umbrella](#) to shade you while you're working.

Think about general hazards outdoors

It's important to keep pathways clear and clean to help prevent falls. Take extra care if you have wooden decking as this can get very slippery when wet.



Don't get disheartened if one of your plants doesn't make it, even the best gardeners lose a plant from time to time! Everyone can grow something, it's just a matter of finding the right plant (or plants) for you. Ultimately, gardening is a gentle way for you to engage with nature and keep your body active at the same time.

We would love to see how you get on. Please share your gardening pictures or gardening stories with us by emailing stories@nrshealthcare.co.uk

You can [find our full range of gardening tools here.](#)