

Your guide to helping your loved one
learn how to garden



Growing plants is one of those rewarding hobbies that almost everyone can try. It doesn't matter if you and your loved one are working with a large, open space or simply want to grow some herbs in a window box, there's a way for everyone to get involved.



Why you should get your loved one involved in gardening

Gardening is a wonderful way to connect with nature. It's a relatively simple form of exercise that can help to build strength and encourage better physical health almost without them even realising it. There have also been studies that suggest it can even help to improve bone density.

By having them plant a garden and tend to it (helping where necessary, of course) it gets them to use a range of motor skills. It can also help them to build a routine around it, giving their day purpose.

With gardening, they can literally see the fruits of their labours grow. If they choose to grow vegetables, they can eat them too!

If you find that your loved one can occasionally feel a little lonely or if they don't have a space of their own to garden in, why not see if there is an allotment space available or a community garden project? Community gardens can help them connect with other people and can bring an enormous sense of wellbeing at doing something that supports their local area too. [Check out the RHS website](#) to see if there's a community garden in their neighbourhood.

How to get started?

1. Consider how much time and energy you can both commit to it

This will affect how adventurous their gardening plans can be. If they need your help to garden or have low energy, then a massive landscaping project is going to be too much, but a small window box might be ideal.

2. Think about any physical limitations

Do they struggle to bend? Can they use a lawnmower, or will you need to do it for them? Have an honest discussion about what help they may need and check if there are [any tools available](#) that can help them overcome any perceived limitations.

3. Decide where they'll be growing their plants

It could be anywhere from a series of small plant pots on a sunny windowsill to an allotment or even a community garden space, if there's one in their local area.

4. Talk through what they want to achieve

Are they looking to try their hand at growing their own vegetables or herbs? Perhaps it's not vegetable growing that interests them but planting a lovely flower garden instead.

5. Get started!

Now you've both agreed how much time can be committed, where they want to garden, what they want to achieve, and how much they're able to do, there's nothing left except to flex those green thumbs and make a start.



Tips and tools for gardening to help older or disabled adults

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

Consider raised beds or containers

If they struggle with bending or would prefer to do their gardening while sitting in a chair or a wheelchair, then a raised bed will bring the plants up higher. This means they won't need to get down to the ground or bend over while tending to them.

Try vertical beds or wall and trellis spaces

They could be a great option for those with limited mobility as they don't need to get down to the ground. It may also be worth thinking about a small window box instead as they might find it easier to manage

Help them 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 their hand and wrist naturally aligned for increased comfort. The longer handles on some of the tools also help to reduce the amount they have to bend, which can make it easier on their backs.





Remind them not to stay in direct sunshine all day

It's easy to get burnt or rapidly overheat if they're outside gardening all day. Try to make sure they have a shaded area to work in on sunny days or perhaps get a portable umbrella to shade them.

Get aids to help them when they're weeding or pruning lower beds

It's a good idea to get a kneeling pad to help protect their knees from the hard ground (and any rocks, stones, spikey plants or twigs that might be hiding in the grass). If they struggle to get up from the ground, you can even get [a kneeler that has support arms](#) to make it easier to get up again.



Think about general hazards outdoors

It's important to keep pathways clear and clean to help prevent falls. Take a few moments when you're out in the garden with them to remove any obvious trip hazards or rubbish. Remind them to take extra care if they have wooden decking as this can get very slippery when wet.

Easiest fruits and vegetables to grow

Need some ideas to help get you both started? These are some of the easiest fruits and vegetables to grow:

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

So, which plants do you think you'll try growing first? We hope you found this guide useful, be sure to let us know how you and your loved one get on. Share your gardening photos and stories with us at stories@nrshealthcare.co.uk.

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