



At least **one in four** British adults will experience some kind of mental health problem in any one year.*



Prescriptions for anti-depressants are at an all time high in England, with **64 million** dispensed in 2016.*

Research shows that gardening can change the way you feel. Ask any gardener why they enjoy this simple task and they will often say that **"it makes me feel good"**.

The therapeutic value and feeling of wellbeing that people get from gardening, growing food and the outdoor environment, has a strong and positive impact on our physical and mental wellbeing.

Research has shown that gardening can help people through periods of difficulty in their lives; it has proven to show significant reductions in depression and anxiety, improved social functioning and resilience and opportunities for vocational development. Gardening can help you get back on top of things and restore balance, it can make you feel happier, more confident and healthier.

Want to find out more?

Thrive is a national charity that uses gardening to bring about positive changes in the lives of people who are living with a disability or ill-health, or are isolated, disadvantaged or vulnerable. This is known as social and therapeutic horticulture (STH).

With 40 years' experience of using gardening to make a real difference to people's lives, we are able to offer information and advice to anyone who wants to harness the benefits of gardening to support good health and wellbeing. We also offer support and training to health, education and social care professionals in social and therapeutic horticulture and other nature-based interventions.




Always consult your GP before making significant changes to your lifestyle, such as accommodating a new exercise regime.

Contact us to see if there is a project or programme near you, or use the tips in this leaflet to start gardening yourself.

To find out more about our work and the people we support please go to

 www.thrive.org.uk

 or call us on **0118 988 5688**



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Gardening: The Feel Good Factor



*Mental Health Foundation (2015)

*NHS Digital Annual Report (2017)

*BRAGG, R., ATKINS, G. 2016 A Review of Nature-Based Interventions for Mental Health Care. Natural England Commissioned Reports Number 204

Gardening can help because:

- ✓ It can be great physical exercise – which in turn helps boost your mood by releasing endorphins – our body's own natural feel-good hormone
- ✓ You can work at your own pace and in small steps doing as much or as little as you like
- ✓ Regular gardening can help bring a new structure to your life
- ✓ You can learn new skills which might be useful in other areas of your life, such as volunteering or employment
- ✓ It can provide a great opportunity to meet people if you want to – for example by joining a gardening club or getting an allotment
- ✓ Gardening is fun, it can offer an opportunity to explore your creativity
- ✓ Tending plants can literally give you a reason to get out of bed in the morning and the satisfaction of knowing that you made it happen
- ✓ If you are finding everyday life hard to cope with, gardening outside could even help you take a first step out of the house

Getting started

If you are feeling low finding the motivation to start something new can be difficult. Gardening with someone else – maybe at a set time and place – might help. You could also try to set yourself small goals. For example, if tackling an already overgrown garden is too much, could you start in just one area of the garden?

Here are a few ideas to help **get you started:**
(which you don't even need a garden for)



Houseplants can be a cheap and easy way to experiment with growing things. Try local plant sales and car boot sales or ask a friend or neighbour for a cutting.



Most health food shops and garden centres sell **seeds** and **beans** for sprouting – try growing your own beansprouts, which will be ready for eating in a week. Or try radish or cress which are quick growing and can give a real boost.



A **chilli plant** and herbs will thrive on a sunny windowsill – look out for 'plug' plants in garden centres or seedlings at plant sales in the springtime.

Of course you won't get the exercise of more strenuous gardening but you'll still benefit from the pleasure of seeing something that you have nurtured grow – and you can garden inside if the weather is bad or you just don't feel up to venturing out.

Gardening and other ways to feeling good:

One of the great things about gardening is that it appeals to a wide range of people - young and old - and can be done in urban and rural areas.

Gardening fits in with the Government's Five Ways to Wellbeing as you:

- ✓ **Connect with others** – by sharing your gardening activities or plants with others, join a Gardening Club or Community Garden
- ✓ **Become more active** – by taking part in gardening outdoors, gaining physical and mental health benefits
- ✓ **Take notice of the world** – being outdoors and experiencing the joys of nature
- ✓ **Keep learning** – develop new skills and gain in confidence
- ✓ **Give to others** – through sharing and supporting others and working as a team

The good news is that health professionals have an appetite to find out more about nature-based interventions like **green care** and **ecotherapy**, of which gardening forms part of, and would be prepared to refer patients to services, like the programmes run by Thrive.*

*Ecominds Report 2013: Feel better outside: feel better inside. Ecotherapy for mental wellbeing, resilience and recovery.