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Inclusive Gardening: Tips and Tools for People with Reduced Mobility

Gardening is an activity that can offer great mental health benefits and connect individuals with nature. However, some may experience difficulty with the physical demands. For example, digging and weeding are a particular challenge, or impossible, for those with limited mobility.

Thankfully, there are ways to make gardening more accessible, whether through specialised tools or thoughtfully planned gardens.

6 Ways a Garden Can Be Made More Accessible

Designing something more practical doesn't have to come at the cost of its beauty. It's possible to enhance functionality without sacrificing the look and feel.

Using ramps in place of stairs

Installing ramps in a garden can help people to access all areas - including patios, decking, and staircases - without the need to climb steps. It's best to choose a ramp with a gentle slope and a wide, non-slip surface to make it easy to navigate for those with walkers or who use wheelchairs.

Adding handrails and grab rails for support where needed

Handrails in the garden can be really helpful for those who need a bit of extra support while moving around the different levels, especially if they have trouble with balance or use a cane.

Planting dwarf fruit trees

Dwarf fruit trees are a great option for people who want a functional yet pretty garden. They're easy to maintain and don't grow taller than 6 feet, making them much easier to manage than traditional trees. You can even plant them in pots or raised beds if there's limited space. Plus, their lower hanging branches make them easier to harvest.

Dwarf trees like peaches, apples, plums, pears, and cherries are available. They all have different 'breed' names:

- Apples:
 - Braeburn
 - Red Falstaff

- James Grieve
- Pears:
 - Concorde
 - Doyenne de Comice
- Peach: Avalon Pride
- Plums:
 - Victoria
 - Black Amber
- Cherries:
 - Stella
 - Sylvia
 - Sunburst

Higher planters and beds means less bending

Raised beds and planters can be a good option for people who use a wheelchair or have difficulty standing for extended periods of time. They make it much simpler to access plants while sitting or standing, without needing to reach or lean over. Furthermore, raised beds can provide extra stability for wheelchairs during gardening tasks if they're moved against the side.

Undemanding plants and shrubs

Low-maintenance plants, like lavender and rosemary, don't need a huge amount of water. They can also be grown in raised beds or planters, which makes them easy to care for without straining your back. Other options include rhododendrons, azaleas, boxwood, and holly.

Wide non-slip paths

Clear pathways improve accessibility by ensuring that wheelchairs and walkers can easily navigate them. They should be wide enough and made of non-slip materials like slabs, bricks or cement.

6 Accessible and Easy to Use Tools

Wheelbarrows with adjustable seats

Everyone, regardless of their size or height, can now move their tools around the garden with ease. This is made possible by an adjustable wheelbarrow seat. There's no need to bend over or exert a lot of effort. Instead, simply adjust the seat to your desired height and enjoy a comfortable gardening experience.

Accessible tools

People with limited mobility can benefit from using tools with longer handles as they don't have to bend as much. Long-handled garden tools, like cultivators, shears, and trowels, are

great examples of adaptable tools that make gardening tasks easier for people who can stand but may struggle to maintain balance when they bend over.

Hands-free lawnmowers

Robotic lawn mowers are geared towards anyone, but those who require wheelchairs or have limited mobility stand to gain the most benefits. These mowers have varying battery lives and noise levels, and their compact designs allow them to squeeze between rows of plants without damaging them.

Long-handled weeders

Weed pullers are designed to help people work upright while removing unwanted plants from the ground. These tools use a spike to pull the weed out by the roots, which is inserted into the soil by pushing down with the feet. Unfortunately, they're not suitable for individuals who can't stand.

Lightweight gardening carts

Garden carts have a flat surface and come in different sizes. They make it much easier to move tools or plants around.

Summary

Gardening can be so very relaxing and rewarding. It can also be very difficult for people who are impaired or use wheelchairs though. There are ways to make it more accessible. Plus, even those who don't garden can benefit from growing indoors on windowsills, in conservatories, or on balconies.