

# Gardens For Your Health

by Nancy Lee Colibaba

Getting out into your own garden or exploring other people's gardens is certainly enjoyable and very inspiring. There are so many other positive results that happen while spending time with plants.



Grand Erie Master Gardeners have organized a garden tour for everyone to come and “poke” around in average homeowners’ gardens. This gives you the opportunity to see what plants other gardeners have chosen and how they have displayed them. Everyone can glean ideas that might fit into their own space and appreciate what others have created.

This does make for an enjoyable afternoon and studies have shown that 88% of people who spend time in a garden find improvement in their mental health and an increased feeling of contentment. As gardeners know, the tasks in the garden promote a healthier lifestyle because they are physically energizing and can help with mobility, burning calories and strengthening the body.

A garden provides the opportunity to learn new skills: plant names, shade-loving plants, full-sun exposures, pests, diseases, and methods of dealing with the various issues that often present themselves. Concentration is also increased by focusing on the needs of the plants. Gardening also lends itself to meeting like-minded community members to share success stories. This gives everyone a great sense of accomplishment. Gardening is a low-pressure, non-threatening activity and the routine care for plants and their response to this care, provides one with feelings of achievement and pride. Once basic skills are mastered, the garden presents continuous new opportunities that challenge and educate the gardener. Life-long learning heightens the sense of accomplishment and self worth.

Spending time outside in the garden provides the fresh air and sunlight that has been proven to improve our moods. Seasonal Affective Disorder

(SAD) is often associated with the winter months but can affect individuals any time of year. The natural sunlight can trigger the release of serotonin, a mood stabilizing hormone to improve positivity.

Tending to the needs of the garden gives the opportunity to pay attention to what is happening in the moment and hopefully allows the gardener's worries to be forgotten for a while. Being mindful and in the present can help reduce stress and result in an improved sense of well-being. The garden provides stimulation to all of our senses and helps us connect with the moment. So, smell the flowers, touch the soil, examine what is in the soil, prune a shrub, weed, water. Doing this will help calm your mind and help you to stay present.

Gardens provide so many benefits to everyone, regardless of whether it is a 2 acre garden or just a window box or a few containers on the patio. Spring is coming, my gardening friends. Hope to see you out in your gardens.