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## ***Your Healthy Green Thumb***

One interesting outcome from the pandemic years is the increase in folks planting their own vegetable gardens. This trend is likely to continue as fresh produce prices increase steadily. It is easy to see why many people have allotted a portion of their yard, patio, or deck to grow healthy, chemical free, super low-cost food!

It turns out that whether you are planting carrots and tomatoes or are the talk of your cul-de-sac due to your amazing rose display, gardening is a very healthy hobby.

Check out this 3-minute video on: [Gardening: Health Benefits as a Hobby - Go Green Stay Healthy! Start Planting Now](#)

## **The Obvious Health Benefits**

For those of us who garden, many health benefits come to mind:

- Exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D
- Fresh air and relaxation, a nice stress release and mindful activity
- Increased intake of fresh vegetables
- Exercise: both cardio and muscle strengthening in our hand and arms, as well as our backs and legs!  
(Learn how many calories you burn when you garden [in this 2-minute video](#))

Being outdoors is good for your physical and mental health. People tend to breathe deeper when they are outside, and this helps to clear out the lungs, improve digestion, improve immune response, and increase

oxygen levels in the blood. Spending time outside has been shown to reduce your heart rate and muscle tension.

Gardening can be beneficial even when done indoors, whether you are growing herbs or house plants by an indoor window, or tending to planters on your deck.

### **The Unknown Health Benefits**

Here are some of the fascinating lesser-known benefits of gardening:

- 1) Studies have found that being in a green space, or even looking out at a green landscape, is linked with better recovery from surgery, less anxiety and depression, and better stress management
- 2) You build self-esteem as you learn to grow and nurture a single plant or even a whole garden; gardening can give you a sense of meaning
- 3) Healthy bacteria in the soil increases our levels of serotonin, and reduces anxiety
- 4) It is an enjoyable activity to do with others, such as children or grandchildren. Gardening has special benefits for kids, and early exposure to dirt has been linked to numerous health benefits, such as reducing allergies and autoimmune diseases
- 5) According to Psychology Today, there is the 'Power of Acceptance'. The article describes, "preparing the best environment you can possibly make for your plants... and allowing nature to take it from there."
- 6) It broadens our 'growth' mindset! There is a lot to learn when gardening through trial and error. We learn to accept that things may not be perfect when we cannot control all the elements.
- 7) Gardening is a great way to connect with others, even strangers. You can discuss gardening tips, successes, and questions. You may even develop better relationships with your neighbours if you share some of your extra bounty (planting zucchinis helps here 😊)

## Get Planting!

It is the perfect time of year to consider planning your garden. If you are a beginner, start small and build from there.

- Start with some house plants or herbs, or perhaps a lovely flower planter outside your front door
- If you do not have a lot of space, google [Vertical gardens](#) for ideas on how to build up, not out
- Another fun Google adventure: [Container gardening](#) is informative and motivating and – depending on the height of your container – may be easier on your back
- Your local nursery may host classes on a variety of projects; staff at gardening stores are full of knowledge and great ideas, and are happy to help get you started

Check out this *Better Homes and Gardens* article on [Ten Steps to Beginning a Garden](#).

So go ahead and have fun, getting dirty and healthy all at the same time!

## Sources:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact [rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca](mailto:rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca).