Gardening For Depression

Depression is something that affects many people, regardless of their age, ethnicity, gender, or social status. In some cases, it is something you are born with, and in other cases, it develops over time. Regardless of where your depression comes from, you might currently be looking for a way to relieve the symptoms and learn to live a happy, fulfilling life. This can be difficult when all you want to do is stay home in a dark room and wait for the time to pass.

If you are dealing with depression, your therapist can provide a variety of treatment options. There are anti-depressant medications, cognitive behavioral therapy, and even becoming involved in certain activities. Many doctors and mental health professionals advise depression sufferers to take up a hobby. This won’t cure your depression, but it often gives you something else to focus on during your darkest moments. It also gets you out of bed and out of the house in many cases.

Gardening is starting to become one of the most popular activities for people with depression. It is good for depression for a common of reasons, from getting you outside to catch some vitamin D from the sun’s UV rays, to having something you care for and watch thrive due to your own efforts. Here is a report that explains what depression is, and how gardening might just be the answer to relieving your symptoms.

If you are someone that has feelings of hopelessness, loss of interest in normal activities, insomnia, irritability, and self-loathing, you might be suffering from depression. This report can help you.

**Section 1: The Mental Health Benefits of Gardening**

Let’s first talk about how gardening can benefit your mental health, not just with depression, but with other mental health disorders. This is sometimes called horticultural therapy, as you get an almost instant mood lift just from tending your garden. Some specialists believe it has to do with participating in an outdoor activity, while others believe it goes much deeper than that.

**Gardening Uses Multiple Senses**

When you garden, there is a lot that is happening. First of all, you are getting a lot more senses than you would if you were holed up inside your room during a depressive episode or in the middle of a panic attack. You have the sounds of nature in the bees and birds, you feel the seeds, soil, flowers, and pants underneath your fingerprints, and you can smell the many aromas while you are gardening. This provides excellent cognitive stimulation, which is known to be helpful with people who struggle with mental illness.

**The Satisfaction Boosts Your Mood**

Another way your mental health can benefit from gardening is due to the feeling of satisfaction you get. This occurs during nearly every step of the gardening process. From when you prepare the land by clearing out weeds and leveling out the soil and testing the soil, to choosing the seeds, planting and watering them, and watching them grow. You can also get a lot of benefits if you choose to start a vegetable or herb garden when you start seeing them grow.

**You Raise Your Endorphins**

Don’t forget about those endorphins! Any form of exercise can really get your blood pumping, which allows your brain to release endorphins, the chemical in your brain that produces happy feelings. Gardening is a highly physical activity that gets you sweaty, burns calories, and elevates your body temperature, all of which can lead to releasing those wonderful endorphins.

**It Boosts Your Self-Esteem**

Part of depression for many people is feeling inadequate in comparison to others. You might feel very down on yourself and are constantly self-deprecating. This can lead to an overwhelming sense that you aren’t good enough, which can send you into an even deeper depression. With gardening, you have the opportunity to turn that around. When you are successful at this activity and actually see the fruit (sometimes literally) of your labors, it helps to boost your self-esteem.

**Section 2: Balance Out Your Serotonin and Dopamine Levels**

Delving a little deeper into how gardening helps with your depression comes the topic of serotonin and dopamine levels. Both of these can have some control over how you feel, which certain activities might be able to help with.

First of all, serotonin is a type of neurotransmitter in your brain that gives signals to your brain. Serotonin is a chemical neurotransmitter than can have control over your mood, sexual function, memory, sleep, appetite, and even your social behavior. The fact that it can affect your mood is why people are concerned about the link between serotonin and depression.

When you get your hands dirty, have physical exercise, and start seeing the satisfaction for your gardening efforts, it can help raise your serotonin levels. Since low serotonin levels are often linked to depression, this in turn can help you find some relief with less depressive episodes overall.

**Gardening Helps Boost Your Dopamine**

Dopamine is another chemical in your brain that can be improved with gardening. Dopamine is another chemical neurotransmitter that can affect your mood and various other systems within your brain and body. The neurotransmitter has the potential to turn into a form of epinephrine, which can help give you a feeling of euphoria in a natural way, similar to how exercise release endorphins, that will then make you feel happier.

There have been studies that look at the link between high levels of dopamine and the harvesting of gardens. Research suggests that when you hunt and gather, as well as harvest the flowers and vegetables you have grown in your backyard garden, it gives you a nice boost of dopamine. This turns into happy feelings and an uplifted mood, which can then help with your depression.

**Section 3: How to Get Started With Gardening**

Now that you know the different ways gardening can help with your depression, it is time to learn the act of gardening itself! Remember that this is an activity with a lot of different options. You don’t have to be an expert gardener that plants an elaborate display of exotic flowers in your yard. You can start small and work your way up. There is a lot to learn, so don’t hesitate to get some gardening books as well. Here are some beginner tips for getting started with gardening.

**Know What Grows in Your Area**

First of all, you need to get to know your region and figure out what grows well in your area. This requires looking at zone maps to determine your region, then finding out what grows best in your region. For the Unites States, the USDA Hardiness Zone Map is what most people go by. There are 11 different zones, each of which has different weather, climate, and soil conditions.

**Test and Prepare Your Soil**

Once you know what can be grown in your region, you need to learn a further about what you will be able to grow. You don’t want to cause more stress by growing something that never flourishes and discover you can’t get it to grow properly. Instead, take some time first to test the soil. This will help you learn more about the pH level and what nutrients it has. You then know if you need to treat the soil before planting.

**Choose Between Seeds and Potted Plants**

Next you can decide how you want to plant the shrubs and flowers iny our garden. If you feel comfortable enough, you can start some things from seeds. This does take a little longer to get them to grow, but it can be an extremely rewarding experience. It is somewhat of a cathartic experience when you place seeds in the soil with your own two hands, then watch as it grows to a tall sunflower plant, head of lettuce, or a tropical plant. There is also the option of starting with potted plants, which is great for a beginner. You still get satisfaction from keeping it alive and growing your garden while also tending to it each day.

**Create a Fertilizer and Watering Schedule**

To make sure you keep up with your gardening, create a schedule from the very beginning. Keep in mind that seeds need more care and watering in the beginning, but then the fertilizing and watering reduces as it starts to grow. You want to make sure you are watering manually instead of setting sprinkler timers for gardening. While sprinklers work great for the lawn, they are not ideal for planting.

**Take Care of Pests**

Don’t forget about pests! They can really do a number on your plants and make it difficult to keep up with them. Get to know the types of pests that frequent different types of plants and trees. For example, you might see small insects like whiteflies and aphids over your plants, root maggots around your vegetables and soil, and grasshoppers in the bushes and tucked inside your shrubs close to the ground. Find a natural way to eliminate the pests.

**Section 4: Different Types of Gardening**

When you are going to start gardening to help alleviate your depression, you should also be aware of the fact that there are some different types of gardening. The type you choose might depend on where you live, how much space you have, what your other time commitments are, and simply what interests you the most. Here are some different types of gardening to help you decide which one is best for you.

**Container Gardening**

One of the easiest forms of gardening – which we will go over with more detail later – is a wonderful way to start small. It is great for beginners and can be done inside or outside your home. With container gardening, testing the soil in the ground and having extra space are non-issues. Container gardening is best when you are just getting familiar with the act of planting flowers and other plants and want to start small. You can have a container garden on your patio or balcony, even if you live in an apartment, or inside your home if you have enough light.

**Vegetable Gardening**

You may also want to grow your own vegetables and herbs to use for cooking and other benefits around the home. If your depression keeps you from eating healthy foods, this will be wonderful for you. Like other types of gardening, you can start slow with just a couple easy vegetables. Tomatoes and squash tend to be the easiest to start with. Just make sure you follow the directions on the seed packets with how far away they need to be planted, what watering schedule they need, and when to harvest.

**Indoor Gardening**

In addition to container gardening you do indoors, there is an entirely different type of gardening referred to as indoor gardening. This is good when you want to have indoor plants that remain indoors, and you aren’t simply doing container gardening but bringing the containers back and forth. You can find some relief for your depression when you spend time indoors and enjoy the plants you are helping to grow healthy and strong. Some good indoor plants include snake plant, Chinese evergreen, spider plant, and English ivy.

**Water Gardening**

Don’t forget about alternative forms of gardening, such as water gardens. If you are someone that finds peace and calm when you are around water, then this is the perfect option for you. Water gardening has many options available. All you really need is a basin or vessel that can hold water, so it can be a small pond, old bathtub basin, or even a very small water garden inside a bird bath. Get creative with it! There are floating aquatic plants like duckweed and water hyacinth, and submerged plants like parrot feather and eel grass.

**Section 5: Easiest Plants to Start With**

If you are feeling a little overwhelmed by the amount of information involved in gardening, even if you know it will help your depression, don’t worry! There are some plants that are easy to start with. Pick just one of these plants and either plant in a container or in an area of your yard with healthy soil and plenty of sun. If you don’t have good soil, you can also use a raised plant bed. This allows you to get the benefits of a container garden, but it blends in better with your yard’s natural landscape and it provides more space.

**Marigold**

Planting marigold is easy for beginners and provides your garden with a plethora of warm shades. Marigolds come in red, yellow, and orange, brightening up your backyard to offer a boost in your mood when you are having a dark day. Marigolds are easy to grow from seeds, so give them a try!

**Cleome**

These are often seen in cottage-style homes, though you can plant them anywhere. They are very fragrant, so you get to open up another sense when enjoying your gardening. They come in pretty colors like magenta, pink, and purple. The cleome flower seeds just need to be spread around in the area you want them to grow, then water them. No covering or fertilization is required.

**Cosmos**

A fun name for a fun flower! Cosmos are beautiful annual flowers in many different shades, including yellow, orange, white, pink, and purple. They are good for low-maintenance gardens, which is when you don’t want to spend a lot of time and energy on your garden, but you still want the benefit of growing something to help with your depression. These don’t need to be covered and start sprouting from the ground in just a couple weeks.

**Morning Glory**

The morning glory is another wonderful flower to bloom in your garden. Morning glories are interesting flowers become they bloom in the morning, but close in the afternoon. You can add pink, white, red, and even blue to your garden by choosing these flowers. Remember these seeds need to be soaked before placing them in the ground.

**Sunflower**

Many would agree that sunflowers are one of the happiest flowers. Imagine going in your backyard when your depression is at its worst, and being surrounded by sunflowers? This can give you an immediate boost of happiness and euphoria, which is what you want when you are trying to reduce those debilitating and hopeless depressive feelings. Sunflowers may look complicated, but they are a good flower for beginners. However, you should only plant them from seeds and never try to transplant them.

**Final Words**

Don’t let your depression overwhelm you to the point where you feel lost and no longer participate in other activities. See a doctor to get help, but also try some home remedies like gardening. You will be amazed by the impact it can make in your life.