

# Growing Wellness From the Ground Up

## **Cultivate well-being: Why gardening matters**

Gardening is far more than planting seeds – it's the practice of **nurturing life**, observing growth and creating a space that supports both people and the environment. Whether you're tending vegetables in a backyard bed, growing herbs on a sunny balcony, or caring for houseplants indoors, gardening invites you to slow down, connect with nature and cultivate something meaningful. It's accessible to beginners and seasoned growers alike and it adapts beautifully to any space or lifestyle. At its heart, gardening is about fostering connection – to the earth, to your food and to yourself.

# The health benefits of gardening

Gardening supports whole-body wellness in ways that feel natural and enjoyable. Every moment spent tending plants – from digging to watering – contributes to your physical, mental and social well-being.



## Physical benefits



- **Light-to-moderate exercise:** Digging, planting, watering and weeding all support mobility and strength.
- **Improved flexibility and balance** through natural movement patterns.
- **Exposure to sunlight** supports vitamin D levels.



## Mental and emotional benefits

- **Stress reduction:** Gardening lowers cortisol and promotes calm.
- **Mindfulness:** Tending plants encourages presence and patience.
- **Sense of accomplishment:** Watching something grow boosts confidence and joy.



## Social benefits

- **Community gardens** build connection and belonging.
- **Sharing produce** strengthens relationships and generosity.
- **Intergenerational learning:** Gardening is a skill passed down and shared.

# Exploring different types of gardening

Gardening is wonderfully flexible – you can tailor it to your interests, space and goals.



## Vegetable and herb gardening:

Grow your own food with tomatoes, peppers, leafy greens, basil, mint and more. It's rewarding, practical and delicious.



## Flower gardening:

Focus on beauty, color and pollinator-friendly blooms that brighten your space and support local ecosystems.



## Native plant gardening:

Choose plants that naturally thrive in your region. Native gardens reduce water use, support wildlife and require less maintenance.



## Container gardening:

Perfect for small spaces; pots, planters and balcony boxes make gardening accessible anywhere.



## Indoor gardening:

Houseplants, microgreens and kitchen herbs bring nature indoors and thrive year-round.



## Why gardening belongs in your wellness program

Gardening aligns beautifully with wellness because it encourages **daily movement, healthy eating, stress reduction** and **connection to nature**. It supports long-term habit building and offers a sense of purpose that grows over time. Gardening is a lifestyle practice that evolves with the person – literally and figuratively – making it a powerful tool for sustainable well-being.

# Getting started: Beginner friendly tips

Starting a garden doesn't require a big yard or a green thumb, just curiosity and a willingness to learn.



## Start small:

A few pots of herbs or a single raised bed is enough to begin. Small successes build confidence.



## Choose the right plants:

Select varieties suited to your climate, sunlight and schedule. Plants that thrive naturally will keep you motivated.



## Focus on soil health:

Healthy soil is the foundation of a thriving garden. Compost, mulch, and organic matter help plants grow strong and resilient.



## Water wisely:

Most plants prefer deep, infrequent watering rather than daily sprinkles. This encourages strong root systems and healthier growth.



## Observe and adjust:

Gardening is a cycle of learning. Notice what thrives, what struggles, and what changes with the seasons. Every plant teaches you something new.

# Gardening as a wellness habit

Gardening can become a meaningful part of your daily rhythm. It can be a mindful morning ritual, a movement break, a creative outlet, a nutritional upgrade or a community activity. It's flexible, accessible and endlessly customizable, making it a powerful tool for personal and community well-being.



If you're dreaming of a thriving garden but aren't sure where to start, the [Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide](#) from OSU is a goldmine. It breaks down the best planting times, ideal garden locations and simple strategies to help your veggies flourish in Oklahoma's unique climate. Whether you're a first-time gardener or looking to level up your harvest, this guide gives you the confidence to dig in and grow with success.