

# Five Eye-Popping Benefits Of Our Favorite Activity - Gardening!

by High Country Gardens



Gardeners are almost always in motion, getting a moderate-intensity workout along with stress reduction.

The many benefits of gardening are all over the news these days.

Gardening has something for everyone, from schools to assisted living centers. Here's our top five

most appreciated gifts from the practice of gardening:



**1. Gardening is great exercise.** Depending on where you live, gardening can be an “extreme sport,” as those afternoons of pulling weeds actually offer a moderate intensity, well-rounded workout. Gardeners are almost always in motion with a never-ending variety of garden tasks. From trimming a lawn to deadheading flowers and planting new plants, we only need to care for our garden to reap the benefits. And just look at our workout equipment!

**2. Love the soil.** Scientists have found that exposure to harmless microorganisms in the environment, like common soil bacteria (*M. vaccae*), helps boost our immune system and it even seems to increase serotonin production in the brain, relieving depression and improving mood. Through a walk in the wild or rooting around in the garden we inhale these beneficial bacteria. They can also be ingested by eating the plants we grow in our vegetable gardens. This may help explain why so many of us experience deeply positive benefits



from time spent in our landscapes. Rooting around in the garden does elicit a jolly state of mind.



**3. *Bury that stress!*** Studies are showing that gardening promotes a real reduction in stress. In one study, thirty gardeners underwent a stressful test. Half then gardened for 30 minutes, and the other half went indoors and read. Mood and stress levels were measured throughout. While both groups recovered from the stress, the

gardeners recovered more quickly and more thoroughly. In fact, study after study is showing that gardeners experience improvements in health and well-being from spending time in their gardens.

**4. *Gardening can make you kinder, happier and more creative.*** Okay, that's a big claim, but several studies from UC Berkeley were designed to measure the effect of exposure to beauty in nature--and what could be more beautiful than one's garden? Each participant was exposed to a natural scene, some subjectively chosen as more beautiful than others. They were then observed playing two economics games that measure generosity and trust. Those participants exposed to the more beautiful nature scenes acted more generously and more trusting in the games than those who saw less beautiful images. These results appeared to be due to corresponding increases in positive emotion.



In another study, participants were surveyed about their emotions while sitting at tables with more or less beautiful plants. After the survey, the participants were told the experiment was done, but that if they liked, they could stay after and make paper cranes as part of a relief effort in Japan. Results showed that participants seated with more beautiful plants stayed on and made more cranes. The researcher's conclusion: exposure to the beauty of nature increases positive emotion. Whether it's a walk in a park or a stroll through your garden, creating beauty has far reaching benefits for the gardener and those who view it.

***Mindfulness, or, give that brain some down time!*** Don't have time for a daily meditation? Gardening is an activity that helps a lot of people experience a sense of 'flow,' where immersion in the moment happens and the brain's list of things to do in the future or rehashing the past melt away. Even a few moments of presence can make a big difference. What is special about gardening is that our hands are in the earth, literally connecting us to the web of life. Feeling the connections we all share, having hope for new plants and seeds, and practicing patience and flexibility as nature shows her hand in unexpected ways. These gifts enhance our resilience and connection to the ebb and flow of life.

