

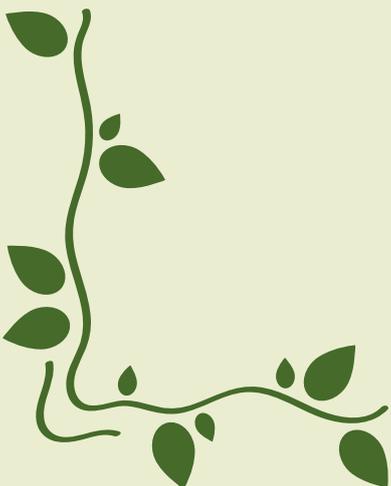
HOW MIGHT DESIGN BEST VISUALLY COMMUNICATE THE BENEFITS OF GARDENING



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INTRODUCTION



This report will investigate the different benefits of gardening. Throughout this report, different areas of people's perception of gardening will be explored whether that be gardening for food or gardening for wellbeing. Each area will be researched into some level of depth, before one area will be chosen based on the research which seems the best to investigate will be looked into more depth. Based on the current situation in the world, the most likely reasons for people to garden would be growing own food and for mental wellbeing. During this report, many sources and documents will be used to further show why people garden. Some sources may contradict each other but some sources may support each other in their findings or statements.

In this report, other than factors supporting the benefits of mental wellbeing via gardening, other factor such as gardening in a community and economical factors will be researched to get a better understanding.

However, the main factor that will be addressed in this report is how gardening, in whatever capacity, can be beneficial towards a person's mental health.



AIMS

- Research multiple factors to understand why people garden.
- Look into real world factors around how some people may not be able to garden as much as they would like.
- Look and understand different reasons.



OBJECTIVES

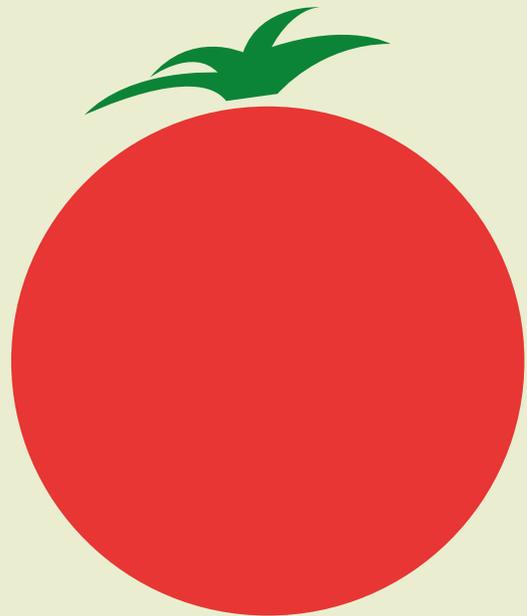
- Look into reasons why people garden instead of the typical reasons. Think about communities.
- Look at the news and the effect of Brexit on the gardening industry.
- Read sources that can explain multiple reasons. This includes interviews and surveys as well as published sources.



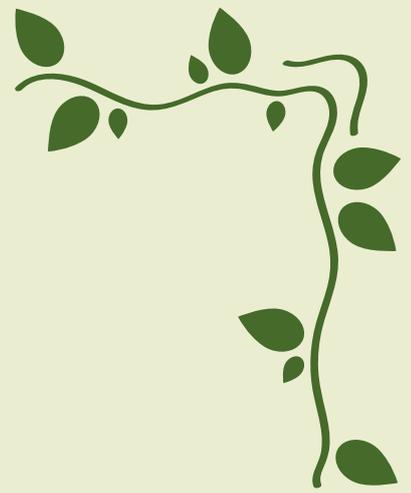
GARDENING FOR FOOD

During the late 1940s and 1950s, it was common for people to grow their own food especially with the after effects of the Second World War, this became less coming with the growing introduction of Supermarkets in the 1960s and 1970s. Supermarkets allowed easier and more accessible access to food. During the last twenty years, there has been a growing number of people who grow their own food: fruit and vegetables. For many people, for them to grow their own food it is a better alternative than buying store bought food. By growing food yourself, there is that guarantee that the food is organic and no chemicals have been added to it.

There is worry free feeling, knowing that the food will be fresh whereas if store bought, there is that uncertainty about how fresh the product is. There are options to buy organic food in stores too but sometimes it puts people off because organic food is normally expensive when bought in a supermarket but it usually costs less when brought from a market.



WWOOF



The Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, WWOOF, is an organisation which brings people together, they 'link visitors with organic farmers'. This organisation centres around educating people about the benefits of growing their own food. They link people with farmers to get a better understanding of the benefits to growing food themselves and bringing and encouraging people to start 'living in harmony with nature'. As part of the programme, WWOOF encourages people to live with farmers to get an insight for themselves. I think that this is cleverly done because instead of telling people by word of mouth with just hearsay, they are actually proving to people the benefits by showing them how it is done by people who do this for a living. It gives people a hands on experience whilst bringing people together.

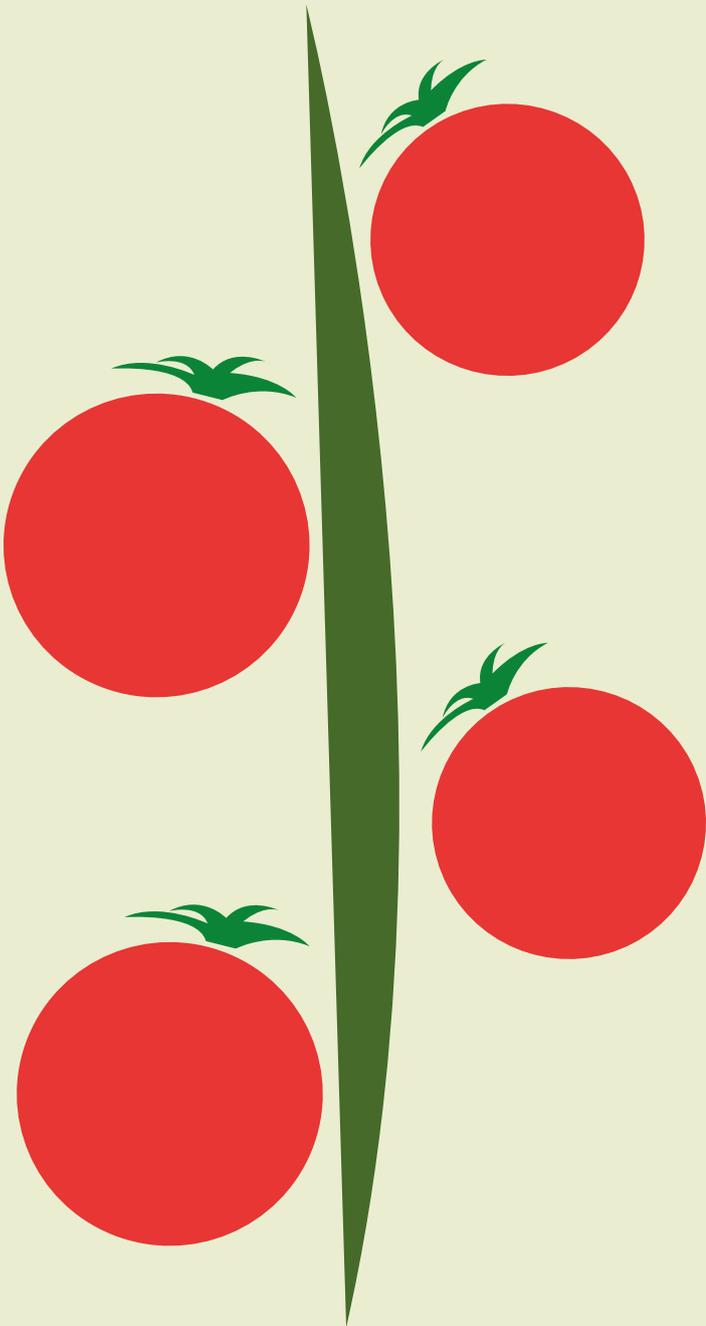
As it says in the name, WWOOF is a worldwide organisation that reaches out to people around the world. It allows different cultures to come together and have the same experiences and same information around organic food. The aim of the organisation is to encourage more people around the world to start farming their own food which is more environmentally sustainable. To them it is also a way to give back to and be at one with nature.



Another factor to consider, is it is more cost efficient. If people are growing their own fruit and vegetables then they are no longer needing to buy the items in their weekly shop, so they are spending less. This has been a growing rise in the last few years, with people wanting their own allotment. According to an article by the Independent,

'In recent weeks the coronavirus outbreak has inspired a surge in interest in growing fruit and vegetables' (Cockburn, 2020), this shows how more people are wanting to grow their own food but for some there is a problem for them to do this, as there is a growing number of people waiting for allotments but very limited spaces. With this information, people have been growing their own food in their gardens, if they have access to a garden.

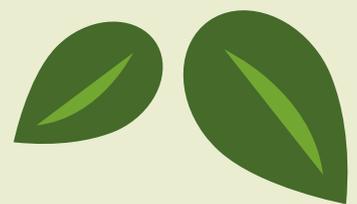
However, according to a rival newspaper, The Guardian, the idea that it is more cost efficient to grow your own food is a lie. According to this article, the writer claims that he found it was cheaper to buy a bag of potatoes from a store rather than buying a bag of grow your own kit of seeds from a catalogue. Wong claims that people would not be 'close to breaking evenly financially' (Wong, 2020), meaning that people are more likely to lose money rather than save money.

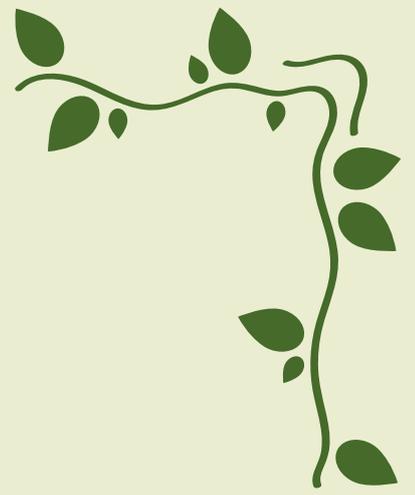


HOW BREXIT IS EFFECTING HOW WE GARDEN

With the outcome of Brexit affecting most sectors, the gardening sector is no different. In terms of UK plants, there will be no issue in purchases. However, in terms of exotic plants there may be issues, 'Speed of imports is expected to slow down and everything will probably take longer to arrive' (2019). This is a problem mainly for florist or any other business that profit from selling different types of plants. This also applies to seeds and bulbs that are produced abroad. With slower processes for delivery of plants, this could be a bigger problem for suppliers because their products may be more likely to wither from being left without care and attention. Meaning they are losing a profit which will affect their business now and in the future. Some seeds will be affected by Brexit as many are European sourced but this is an issue that will not greatly affect buyers as seeds produced in the UK are still available.

Suppliers are having to pay more to have the plants imported as they are having to pay fees including customs and 'pay for checks that plants coming from the EU are disease free' (Dale, 2020). This is causing more problematic issues and affects the supply they may order. For instance, they may order less than what they usually do but for the same price they were paying before. Then there is the issue mentioned before, the plants may not come as the supplier is expecting. The other issue of longer delivery services is buyers worry about 'the introduction of pests and diseases' (Dale, 2020) affecting the delays and making them longer, thus affecting their business if there is another factor that can cause disruptions to their products such as plant, bulbs and seeds and the deliverance of the products.





GARDENING FOR WELLBEING

There are many aspects to gardening that can contribute to benefitting mental health. Later in the report, there will be a discussion to how gardening can help people through lockdown. But for now, there will be an insight into the benefits towards wellbeing, including scientific evidence towards how gardening can affect us in a positive view.





From a scientific approach, there is study to show how gardening can benefit people. According to a study, 'humans are more at ease and relaxed within a natural environment' (Domoney, 2020), meaning that it helps relieve anxiety. This study suggests that people benefit from being around nature. Throughout people's lives, they are told that fresh air and exercise is good.

Other than the scientific reasons to the benefit of gardening, there are personal benefits that are common that do not require scientific results to understand the outcome. There is a sense of accomplishment and purpose when given the responsibility to keep a plant or grow your own food. Gardening serves as 'physical and social wellbeing' (Domoney, 2020) for people who suffer from mental health.

Other than given some a sense of purpose, it also allows people to socialise with others who share the same interests as them. Like any other activity, gardening gives a sense of purpose for those who feel they are without.

A study conducted by an organisation, Thrive, stated that '80 per cent reported better mental health' (2017) as a result of gardening. This report is the same as the other research in the report. It discusses the same information regarding how gardening gives people a sense of purpose. The recurring theme is that gardening gives people purpose which helps those with mental health who feel less than motivated. However this report also mentioned how it helps people build up more confidence.



PSYCHOLOGY

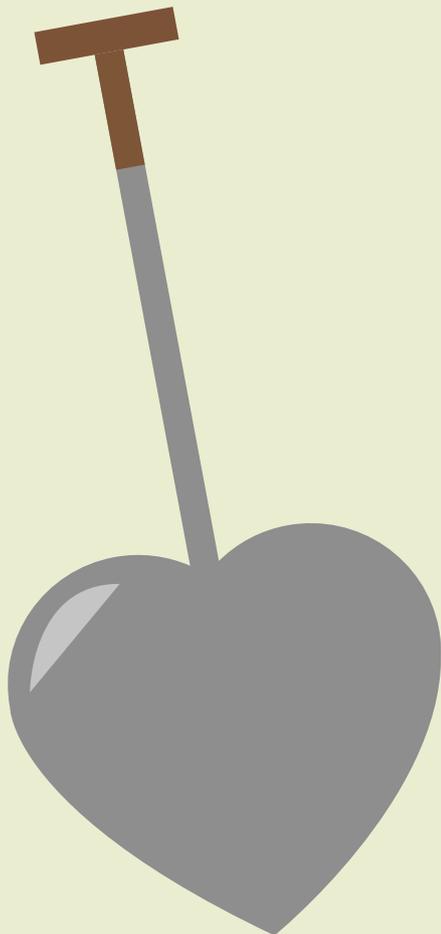
Another direction to look into is the psychological view. An article from a Psychology Magazine looks at the connection between the mind and being productive in the garden. This article is a personal experience of the writer about how she feels towards gardening. The writer, Dav Piper, works on people's gardens and show them what is best for their gardens depending on what the client is happy with. Piper claims that 'gardening has made me a worthier person' (Piper, 2021) which has made her more open than she was before. type of relationship. Furthermore, the writer claims that gardening is 'as much about the people as the plants' (Piper, 2021), meaning that gardening brings people together as said in other researched articles.



It is believed by this writer that by taking the time to see how great and beneficial gardening is through giving 'time and love' (Piper, 2021) to something as simple as caring for a plant. To Piper, this is a gateway to feeling more open by feeling comfortable with doing something that one enjoys. Piper links the love of garden the same as the love in a relationship. It is a building tool to bring people together by starting to love something else before thinking about how to show that same love in any type of relationship.

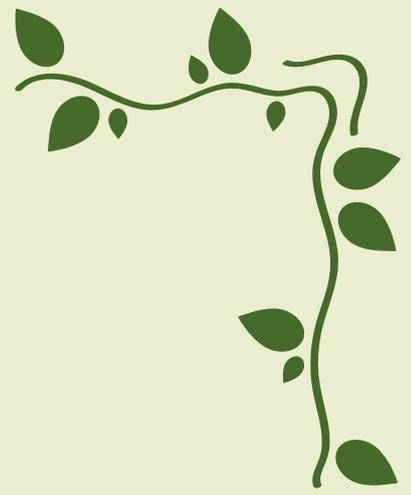


Another article by Piper from an edition from the previous year of the magazine talks about the calmness that comes with gardening especially during the cold season. Piper sees the less exciting work as 'mindful reflection' (Piper, 2020), meaning it can be seen as a time to reflect on the past and look forward to what's to come whilst planning what to do in the garden in the future. Additionally, Piper claims that during this time of being able to do very little in the garden, it can still be a 'period for contemplation' (Piper, 2020) by planning. This tells the reader that regardless of the time of year, even when it feels like a person cannot do much in the garden, then people can still plan for what they want or could do in the garden when the weather is right.



Gardening does not have to be a think that a person can only do for a certain number of months then wait till the following year. As a side note to this article, it gives a statement about the physical benefits that gardening can have on a person, 'half an hour of gardening burns a comparable amount of calories' (Piper, 2020) compared to physical exercise. Compared to the other research articles, this is the first instance when physical benefits to gardening has been mentioned and compared. It gives an understanding to people how it can act as a form of exercise but it is difficult to confirm how accurate as it is very much a statement with very little statistics to follow up the statement. However, it acts as words of encouragement to the readers but there is evidence that gardening is a form of exercise.





METHONOLOGY

As well as the secondary sources such as articles and reports, another methodology that can be used to help get a further insight into the subject are interviews and surveys. This allows a more first-hand approach and it allows a more in depth response. As well as giving a more in depth answers, surveys and interviews are useful because they can be used to either argue or support research that has been published for public use.

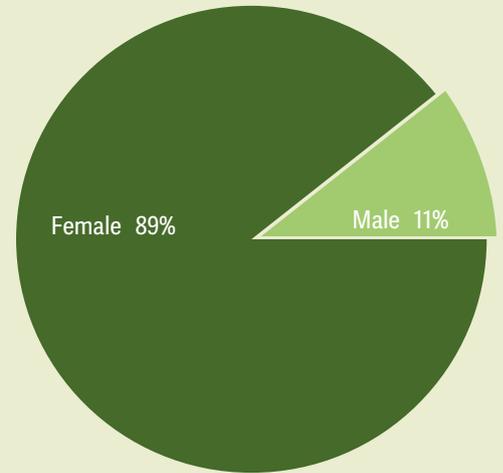


SURVEY RESULTS

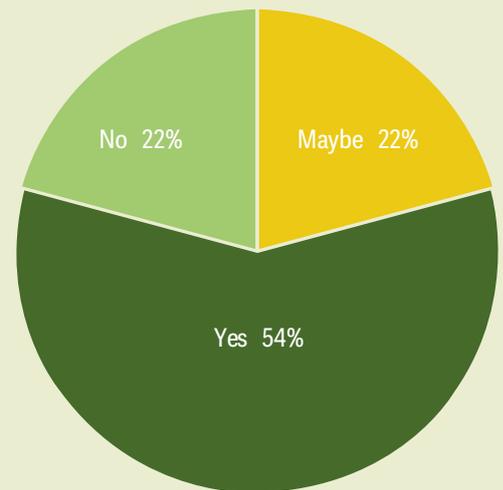
The reason a survey was used to conduct research was 'surveys are vital tools used to gather information on individual perspectives in a large cohort' (Jones, 2013), meaning with that more opinions can be gathered in one space and evaluated.

A survey conducted by myself, gave a better insight into people's opinions towards gardening. The main purpose of the survey was to get an insight into the view towards gardening and how it may be beneficial towards someone's mental health. The purpose of the survey is to reach a wider audience. Furthermore, the results gave a better insight into who is the targeted age range so this will help further with the decision of who should be interviewed or to see if there are any interviews that have already been conducted.

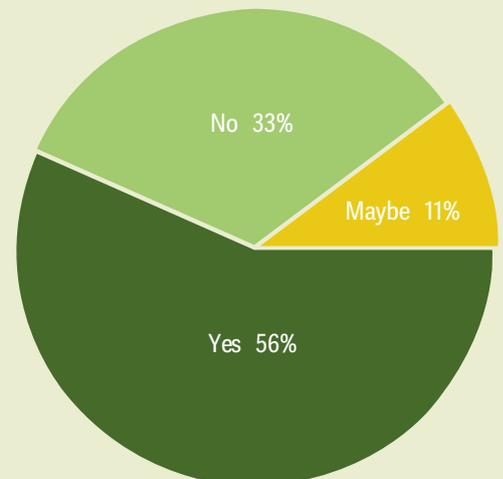
Majority of people who answered the survey were in the age range twenty one to twenty five years old and were female.



A graph to show the gender of those who answered the survey



A graph to show people's awareness of the benefits of gardening



A graph to show if people are aware of the benefits of gardening for mental health



The results showed me that the majority who completed the survey claimed they did not garden themselves, whilst only a small percentage said they did but not as much as they would like. This is still useful information because it gives a better insight into if people garden or not and why they may or may not.

From the survey, it needed to be clear if people were aware of the benefits of gardening and if they could name any benefits they could think of. From this graph, it gives a clearer and better understanding of people's awareness. It is interesting that some answered 'Maybe' as it gives a better understanding of people's situation. The age range fits the category of students, many students do not own their own home or an allotment so may not be able to garden even if they want to.

The results for the follow up question to the previous question were very helpful and follows on from the research conducted previously in the report. The results are varied which is really useful to this report as it shows different peoples opinion which can either agree or disagree with the secondary research. Some answers are along the same lines but worded differently. The results for the follow up question regarding what the benefits of gardening were mainly regarding mental health and how growing your own food can save money in the long term. One answer was interesting and something that was something else to consider, someone stated gardening is a way to have a chance to be creative and design something. This is another area to consider because people find being creative as a positive way to help with their mental health.

The survey also questioned people regarding their knowledge and opinions about the link between mental health and gardening. As expected, people agree that there is a link, and it was expected that some people do not think there is a link. However, it was unexpected that people were not entirely sure if there is a link. To understand further to this response, a follow up question was asked about how gardening is beneficial to mental health. To give a further insight into people's opinions, some of the responses coincide with the research with regard that gardening gives people purpose and a stress reliever. Furthermore, one response discusses the social aspect by giving people opportunity to socialise with other people. Additionally, the responses also gives thoughts about other reasons about the benefits towards mental health such as feeling a sense of control over something when you feel like you have no control.

The feedback from the survey coincides and supports the research conducted with regards to the benefits of gardening and how it can have an effect on people's mental health. However, there was only personal opinions, no scientific statements were made.

Overall, the results were surprising but useful. Perhaps, there would have been mention to the physical benefits, there was no mention of how being outside is a benefit in itself. Neither was a sense of purpose mentioned in any response, just as previous documents in the report have stated.



INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a useful way to collect information for research purposes as they can give a more in depth answer to a question (2018).

These questions were written by myself and sent out via email to Canton Community Gardens, which is a community set up to encourage people to participate in events and activities around gardening and the environment. Both are outside the age range from the survey but they do give insight into the type of people across varies age ranges. One interview does include they point of view of young people getting involved with gardening.



INTERVIEWEE 1

Roger Phillips, Male



Overall, the responses were useful. The questions were directed towards why do they garden and directed towards the growing interest in gardening especially in the last year.

Without being too direct, one question was along the lines of mental health; Do you find that gardening has an affect on your mental health? If so, how? Mr Phillips' response to this question gave an insight into the idea that gardening does have a positive impact on someone's mental health, as he states as soon as the first lockdown hit last year going to his allotment with his partner was 'fantastic and certainly helped my mood and wellbeing' (Phillips, 2021). Some of Mr Phillips responses to the questions back up points previously stated earlier in the report. Mr Phillips does think that more people have a growing interest in gardening and Mr Phillips encourages other people by 'giving out sunflower plants' (Phillips, 2021) in his street. This includes young people getting involved which Mr Phillips noticed.



INTERVIEWEE 2

Bob Grimshaw, Male



This interview gives a more in depth answers to each question. For Mr Grimshaw, gardening is something to take pride in and make a difference in the community especially in the 'neglected areas' (Grimshaw, 2021). This was a community coming together to look after the land they live that have been neglected by their local council due to cuts.

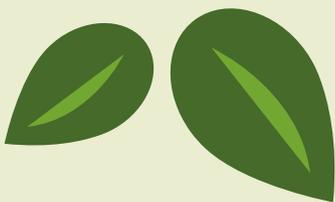
Mr Grimshaw mentioned that by not having an allotment, there are other ways to still garden. During this lockdown, Mr Grimshaw 'volunteered at Chapter with their urban garden' (Grimshaw, 2021) so that Mr Grimshaw could enjoy and get involved with gardening. This community is for people most affected by the lockdown, work-wise, in terms of their business having to close as it is a non-essential industry such as theatre.

Mr Grimshaw enjoys the social aspect and getting involved with other 'like minded people'. A point not mentioned before, is in some gardening communities, any produce that has been planted, can be taken home by the person who cared for it, which is something that is not commonly known. With regards to mental health, Mr Grimshaw thinks that like any other task, gardening can get you 'in the zone' (Grimshaw 2021). It acts like a pleasant distraction to those who need it during this covid-19 lockdown.

GARDENING AS PART OF A COMMUNITY

There are many gardening communities around today with a growing number of people waiting to have their own allotment. Other than allotments, there are communities in which people can volunteer and help garden a plot of land.

There are many projects and organisation which encourage people to join a gardening community to better people's physical and mental health. According to a report, it states that taking part in gardening in a community can be a 'powerful tool' (Unknown) that encourages people to come together who would usually not be social. It can also be a tool to encourage people to be healthier by eating healthy food. This is encourage when people have that sense of pride when eating the food that they grew themselves.

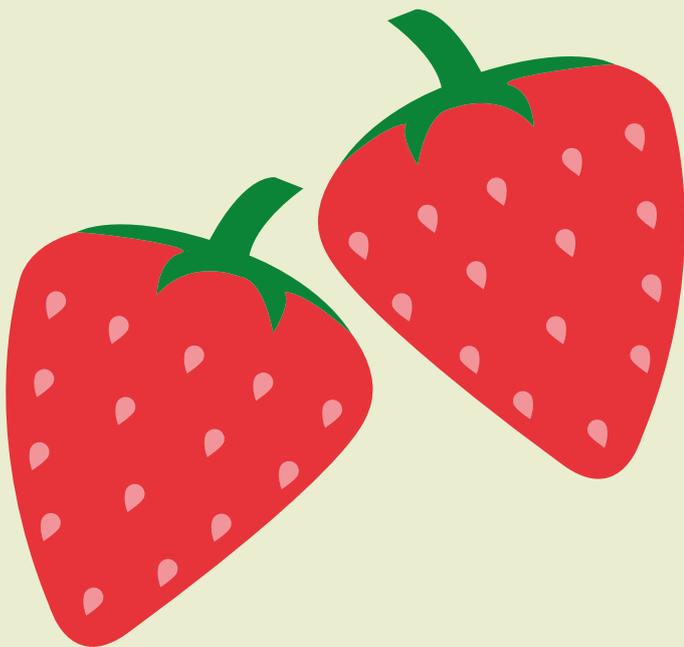


As mentioned before, being part of a community is beneficial to a person's mental and physical health and this is mainly due to the reason that people are interacting with people who have the same interests. A social aspect can have a profound effect on someone's mental health.

When people think of a gardening community the first thing that comes to mind is people gathered working on a plot of green land together. However there are some organisations that create a different type of gardening community. There are organisations that create a nature community for therapeutic purposes. 'Blossoms at Larne Lough' (2018), is an organisation which creates a community for those needing therapy for whatever reason but would rather not have the typical therapy session where they are in a room having to talk. The course set up focuses on allowing people to enjoy engaging with nature.

GARDENING IN ISOLATION

Especially in the last year, gardening has become a growing activity to help people during lockdown. For people, this is their way of being able to go outside and be proactive, whilst feeling accomplished.



One article gives an insight into the benefits of gardening for someone who has been greatly affected by the covid-19 pandemic in the last year. Dr Tamasi Basu gave an insight into her experience with gardening and she described 'how growing vegetables really changed the way I look at life and the situation [covid] as a whole' (Truslove, 2020) which she encourages others to try. She told her patients to try it as a way to relieve stress for those who suffer from depression or anxiety. Also, she told her patients who are recovering from the covid-19 pandemic that by spending time in the garden they are able to exercise which can help in their recovery.

DATASHEET

This datasheet was conducted to make note of the benefits towards health with nature. Each point in the datasheet was taken from different sources. Each is a positive point that describes how gardening can be a benefit for people and how it affects people. According to this document, a few of the points state that there is a notable, but positive difference in someone's feelings and wellbeing when walking around a nature environment compared to an urban environment such as 'reduced mental fatigue, improved mood and reduced stress' (Twedt, 2016). Another section of the document focuses on mental and physical health. As mentioned before, a lot of these points back up previous research in the report by mentioning that it is a great stress and anxiety reliever.

One point states that 'gardening gives people a creative way to change their stress and frustration into something beautiful that offers comfort and joy' (Hall and Dickson, 2011). This is a more in depth way to describe how gardening can be creative whilst contributing to people's mental health in a positive way. It gives people a sense of control when they feel like they are losing it. Additionally, there are physical benefits to gardening and often doctors prescribe to their patients to get out in nature as part of their recovery. One source claimed that being in nature can have a positive affect on people's health in the long term, 'reductions in heart disease, cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, and also reduced levels of obesity and higher self-rated mental health' (Buck, 2016).



ESSENTIAL AND NON ESSENTIAL

During the current lockdown and previous lockdown due to covid-19, there have been limitations with buying items if they are classed as non-essential items. Each store has a different approach to what is considered a non-essential item, there are a few stores, such as Wilko, which class gardening products including seeds as non-essential and refuse to sell. This is a great impact on those who garden for whatever reason, either that be to grow food or something they enjoy.

However, there are some large corporate stores, such as Tesco and Sainsburys, that will sell gardening products. For whatever reason stores have a different approach but this does cause difficulty for those who want to garden but their nearest store will not sell the products due to the current lockdown. This shows how unclear and the lack of information that is given due to the current situation.



CONCLUSION

To summarise the report, the evidence suggests that gardening can have a overwhelmingly positive benefit on someone's mental health. Regardless of why and what people garden, it all falls down to it has some effect on someone's mental health even if that person does not realise. This research has shown that gardening does have a positive effect and people would recommend gardening to anyone who feel they are at a low point.

Some points in the report were surprising such as it can be expensive to grow food yourself but this point was contradicted and people thought it was a way to save money. However, overall the points stated in the report were expected and had evidence to back up the statements. Majority of the reports gave similar responses, some with more depth than others but each supported one another in regards that gardening has an effect on a person's mental health by giving people a sense of purpose. It is about being active.

When taking into consideration further development, it is worth considering thinking about how to get people aware and encourage people that gardening can be fun.



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APPENDIX

Survey Questions:

- 1) Age?
- 2) Gender?
- 3) Do you have a garden?
- 4) If yes, do you garden yourself?
- 5) What do you garden?
- 6) Are you aware of different benefits to gardening?
- 7) If yes, can you name a few?
- 8) Are you aware that gardening can be beneficial to your mental health?
- 9) If yes, how so?

Interview Questions:

- 1) Why do you garden?
- 2) What do you garden?
- 3) Do you garden at an allotment or in your own garden? Or Both?
- 4) Do you find gardening has an effect on your mental health? If so, how?
- 5) Do you find more people are getting involved in gardening?

