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*April 17, 2020*

# THE BENEFITS OF GARDENING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE EARTH

It has been nearly three weeks since Governor Roy Cooper issued a stay at home order in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. For many, this abrupt change in our schedule has been difficult to adjust to. With more free time in the day, many are wondering what to do with their extra hours. One at-home activity to preoccupy you is gardening. Gardening is not only a fun hobby, but it also helps reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

Many experts recommend surrounding yourself with a green setting such as a garden. Whether you have a window garden, a few plants on the porch, or an in ground garden, the simple act of gardening promotes overall wellbeing. It is also an activity for the entire family, offering a chance for everyone to relax during this stressful time. Though viewing a natural landscape can provide a similar relief, gardening is more likely to keep you consistently going outside.

Not only is gardening good for your mental health, but it is also an opportunity to give back to the Earth. Gardening allows for CO<sub>2</sub> to be taken from the atmosphere by plants and oxygen to be released, a process otherwise known as photosynthesis. This natural process assists in efforts to reduce global warming. Additionally, gardening creates habitats which support the ecosystem around your home. There are just no negative outcomes of gardening!

While we are continuing to social distance and stay at home, give gardening a try. It will positively affect your mental health and the Earth.

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