

Financial Freedom Through Foliage: 8 Plants That Can Slash Your Grocery Bills



In the quest for financial freedom, many overlook the power that lies in their own backyards—or even on their windowsills. As grocery bills continue to climb, partly due to global supply chain issues and inflation, savvy individuals are turning to home gardening, not just as a hobby but as a

strategic move towards greater economic independence. This approach not only reduces reliance on commercial food sources but also promotes a sustainable lifestyle. Here, we explore eight plants that are not only easy to grow but can also make a significant dent in your grocery expenses.

1. Herbs: The Flavorful Savers



Herbs like basil, mint, cilantro, and parsley are culinary staples that can be costly when bought fresh. Growing these at home is incredibly cost-effective, as they require minimal

space and can easily thrive on a sunny windowsill. Incorporating fresh herbs into your meals enhances flavors without the need for expensive store-bought sauces and seasonings. Moreover, herbs are perennial in many climates, meaning you can enjoy their fresh flavors year-round with minimal investment.

2. Tomatoes: A Versatile Bounty



Tomatoes are a garden favorite due to their versatility in the kitchen. From salads and sandwiches to sauces and soups, they

can be incorporated into a myriad of dishes. Growing tomatoes at home can drastically reduce your grocery bills, especially considering the price of organic or heirloom varieties in stores. With proper care, a single tomato plant can yield a substantial crop, providing you with a steady supply throughout the season.

3. Leafy Greens: Nutritional Powerhouses



Leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, and lettuce, are packed with vitamins and minerals and are essential for a balanced diet. However, they can be pricey and perish quickly when purchased from a store. Growing these at home ensures you have a constant, fresh supply. These greens are also known for their fast growth and successive harvesting, meaning you can cut what you need and leave the plant to continue growing, maximizing your yield and reducing waste.

4. Bell Peppers: Colorful Cost-Cutters



Bell peppers are another high-yield plant that can add a splash of color and a boost of vitamins to any meal. While they can be expensive and often heavily sprayed with pesticides in stores, growing your own can provide you with a healthier, cheaper alternative. Bell peppers can be grown in pots or in the ground, and with proper care, each plant can produce multiple peppers throughout the growing season.

5. Zucchini: The Prolific Producer



Zucchini is known for its abundant yield, even for novice gardeners. This versatile vegetable can be used in everything from baked goods to savory dishes, making it an invaluable addition to your garden. Due to its prolific nature, you can save significantly on groceries during the growing season, with just a few plants providing ample produce.

6. Strawberries: Sweet Savings



Strawberries are a delightful treat, but their cost can add up, especially for organic options. Growing strawberries at home can yield a sweet harvest that's free from harmful chemicals. They can be grown in gardens, containers, or even hanging baskets, making them suitable for a variety of spaces. Plus, they perennially return, providing you with beautiful berries year after year.

7. Garlic: The Essential Bulb



Garlic is an essential kitchen ingredient used in a multitude of cuisines around the world. It's also incredibly easy to grow and stores well, allowing you to have a homemade supply at your fingertips. A single clove can produce a whole new bulb, offering significant savings over time. Garlic requires little space and can even be grown among other plants as a natural pest deterrent.

8. Potatoes: The Hearty Staple



Potatoes are a hearty staple that can be stored throughout the winter, providing a valuable resource for reducing grocery bills. They can be grown in the ground, in large pots, or even in specialized grow bags. With a small number of seed potatoes, you can harvest a significant yield of this versatile vegetable, perfect for a variety of dishes.

Embracing the Green Thumb for Financial Freedom



By incorporating these plants into your gardening endeavors, you can enjoy the dual benefits of reducing your grocery bills and moving closer to financial freedom. Not only does home gardening offer economic advantages, but it also promotes a healthier lifestyle and a deeper connection to the food you consume. As you harvest your own produce, you'll savor the taste of financial savings and the rewards of self-

sufficiency.

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- [Seed-Saving Techniques You Should Master](#)
 - [Frugal Garden Ideas from Italian Renaissance Gardens](#)
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10 Steps to Learning to Garden Meditate



Gardening was never my forte. Honestly, I proudly wore the label of a “brown thumb” for most of my life. I’d often cringe at the thought of tending to plants, certain I’d unintentionally send them to an early demise. Little did I know that my journey from reluctant gardener to someone who finds solace in the garden would be a transformative

experience. It's the mindfulness/ meditation aspect that does that for me. Here are the ten steps that it took to get there.

1. Starting Small

My first foray into gardening was timid. I began with a single-potted plant—a resilient succulent known for its ability to withstand my neglect. It required minimal care, allowing me to build confidence slowly. It wasn't the first one I'd ever bought. I had killed others before. But I was ready, albeit with baby steps.

2. Learning Through Mistakes

The beginning was marked by countless failures. Overwatering, underwatering, and choosing the wrong plants were all part of the learning curve. But with each mishap, I began to observe the subtleties of my plants' needs, fostering a sense of mindfulness in the process. I honestly never thought that I'd get there. My sister always tells me "Just ask the plant what it wants." I always thought she was nuts. But she's not. You observe and you attend and you are mindful and then it starts to all click.

3. Patience and Presence

Gardening helped teach me the art of patience and presence. Instead of rushing through tasks, I started to slow down, observing the nuances of my plants. And when I failed to do that, they died. This repeatedly reminded me of the importance of being fully engaged in the moment. This is really what mindfulness is all about.

4. The Healing Power of Nature

Amidst the frustrations and mishaps, I found solace in

nature's healing embrace. The garden became my refuge, a place where I could escape the chaos of daily life and immerse myself in the serenity of the natural world. I am an urban woman. However, I love the fact that San Francisco offers so many opportunities to immerse yourself in nature within the city itself. You don't even have to have your garden. You can enjoy any of the small and large gardens throughout the city as spots for meditation.

5. Nurturing Growth, Both Plant and Self

As my gardening skills improved, I noticed a parallel growth within myself. Tending to plants became a metaphor for self-care and nurturing personal growth. I found that the more I nurtured my garden, the more I nurtured my well-being. The more I nurtured myself, the easier it was to remember to nurture the plants. It helps to feel more tied into nature.

6. Accepting Imperfection

Gardening taught me to embrace imperfection. Not every plant thrived, and not every leaf remained unblemished. Just as I accepted my plants' flaws, I learned to accept my imperfections with greater compassion. This is something I've worked in throughout my life, particularly through therapy. There are many ways of approaching it. The point is that gardening teaches us things like this in a somatic, experiential way that differs from just thinking about it.

7. Mindful Observations

In the garden, I developed the practice of mindful observation. I'd spend moments simply gazing at the play of sunlight on leaves, the dance of pollinators, or the delicate unfurling of a bud. These contemplative moments allowed me to

connect with the beauty of the present. They reminded me that everything that's happening in my head is related to the past or the future. What's happening right now in front of me is what's real. The rest is usually just noise. By teaching myself to focus on just one thing in a garden, I learned mindfulness. And that leads to learning meditation.

8. Letting Go of Control

Gardening reminded me that life, like the garden, is filled with uncontrollable variables. I couldn't command the rain to fall or the sun to shine. I couldn't always shield my plants from pests or disease. Even when it seemed like I was doing everything right, plants would fail to thrive. It was hard. I wanted to fix it.

However, in relinquishing the illusion of control, I discovered a profound sense of freedom. It was a reminder that there is beauty in the natural ebb and flow of existence. Sometimes, the most vibrant blooms emerge from the unexpected and unplanned corners of life.

Gardening became a symbol of embracing impermanence. It offers an ongoing lesson in letting go that extends far beyond the garden's borders into my life. I still struggle with wanting to control everything but it reminds me again and again that it is okay that I cannot.

9. Celebration of Growth

Each tiny sprout, every new leaf, and the first bloom are all reasons for celebration. Witnessing the gradual transformation of my garden taught me to savor the journey and appreciate the beauty of growth. As with all of the other lessons, this was less about the garden than it was about myself. I exist in cycles and seasons but am also always growing. It's a powerful thing and it's nice to see it outside of yourself then to see

how it relates to the inside of yourself.

10. Gardening as a Meditation Practice

Surprisingly, I found that gardening was my form of meditation or mindfulness. The act of tending to plants, gazing upon the deep colors of flowers, and immersing myself in nature's rhythms all became a profound mindfulness practice. I didn't know that this would happen although looking back it seems inevitable. By learning not to worry about "doing it right" and just being present in the act of doing it, I was able to allow things to grow. And in the process, I grew, too.

Read More:

- [The Gardener's Brain](#)
- [Substack Gardening: Must-Read Newsletters if You Love Gardening](#)
- [A Visit to Hollister House Garden](#)

The Best Plants for Mental Health Benefits



My two biggest passions in life are art and mental health. Gardening is an art form. Also, gardening has many mental health benefits. I was curious to do some research into the best plants for mental health benefits. Of course, this will vary from person to person. Nevertheless, there are some plants commonly considered beneficial in this way.

Plants and Mental Health

[Keeping plants improves mental health](#) according to numerous studies and personal anecdotes. Potential benefits include:

- Reduces stress
- Reduces loneliness
- Improves mood
- Creates routine and structure
- Improves cognitive function as well as creativity
- Enhances self-esteem
- Improves sleep

Notably, of course, this will vary from person to person. I'd argue that keeping plants can help most people's mental health but that what this looks like for each person will vary. For example, if you have severe depression, then it can be really challenging to get the motivation to water every day. Going out to your garden each day can help ease the depression. And yet, if you can't keep up with it and your plants die, that can make you feel worse. As someone who lives with recurring depression, I understand that there's a fine line. So for people like me, keeping fewer plants that require less care can be a good solution.

The Best Plants for Mental Health Benefits

The plants that people prefer are also very individual, of course. Some people feel best when growing healthy vegetables that they can eat. Others thrive with lots of very colorful flowers around. You'll know – and continue to discover – what is right for you. That said, there are some plants that are [widely considered](#) the best plants for mental health benefits. Here are some common examples:

Lavender

Lavender is known for its calming and relaxing properties. It has been shown to lower heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Lavender also has a soothing scent that can help to promote better sleep. Personally, I use lavender essential oil in my diffuser every night. I also use lavender spray on my bedding. Natural lavender growing in a garden would likely be even better.

Jasmine

Jasmine has a sweet, floral scent that has been shown to reduce anxiety and promote relaxation. Like lavender, it can

also help to improve sleep quality. Moreover, it's been shown to reduce symptoms of depression. If you're looking for an all-over "feel good" plant for mental health benefits, jasmine is one good choice.

Aloe Vera

Aloe Vera is a low-maintenance plant that can help to purify the air and remove toxins. It can also help to reduce stress and promote relaxation. In fact, aloe vera has natural sedative properties that can help to reduce stress and anxiety, improve sleep, and boost mood. Therefore, this is a really great indoor plant for both physical and mental health.

Peace Lily

Just the name tells you that this plant might have mental health benefits. Similar to aloe vera, the Peace Lily is another plant that can help to purify the air and remove toxins. Moreover, the plant contains compounds that can help to promote relaxation and improve mood. It is easy to care for and can thrive in a variety of environments, making it a great choice for those looking to improve their health without taxing their energy.

Snake Plant

The Snake Plant is yet another low-maintenance plant that can help to purify the air and remove toxins. The plant releases oxygen at night, which can help to create a more restful sleep environment. Additionally, it is known for its hardiness and ability to thrive in a variety of environments, so it's a versatile option in terms of plants for mental health.

Spider Plant

Similar to the Snake Plant, the Spider Plant is a low-maintenance plant that purifies the air. While the Snake Plant

is particular good at cleaning the air at night, the Spider Plant provides overall toxin clearing. A room with both of these should have nice clean air, making it easier to breathe and rest. This is always good for our mental health!

Rosemary

There are several great herbs that you can grow to promote mental health. Rosemary is a great example. The scent of rosemary has been found to stimulate the brain, which can improve cognitive function. Many mental health conditions affect concentration and memory. Rosemary can help with that! And yet, even while it boosts mood, it's also a calming plant.

Moreover, you can, of course, consume the rosemary that you grow. This has many physical and mental health benefits. Reducing inflammation and improving immune system function are two of the biggest benefits. This helps both the body and the mind.

Basil

Basil is another herb that can help to improve memory and concentration. It also has a calming effect and can help to reduce stress and promote relaxation. Moreover, it has cardiovascular benefits. Plants that support your overall health are good for your mental health. After all, mental health is health, as they say!

Sunflowers

Personally, I find it hard to be unhappy when looking at a sunflower. Of course, in the throes of depression, it's hard to recognize that beauty. Nevertheless, I've found that the little things do help with my baseline mood. Sunflowers are mood-boosting flowers. Their bright yellow color and large size make them a joy to look at. Plus, their association with sunshine and warmth can have a positive impact on mood.

Marigolds

These are also great flowers for mental health benefits. Their vibrant colors and easy care make them a popular choice for gardeners and flower enthusiasts. The bright colors are great mood boosters. And yet since they're easy to take care of, you run less risk of low self-esteem from times when you lack the energy to provide full care.

Chamomile

This is another flower that is relatively easy to grow and care for. Chamomile is especially known for its ability to promote sleep and reduce insomnia. After all, haven't you ever been offered chamomile tea to sleep? You can make tea with the plant in your garden or just reap the mental health benefits of tending to it.

Read More:

- [6 Health Benefits of Gardening](#)
- [5 Ways Healthy Gardens Help the Planet](#)
- [Being a Beginner in the Garden](#)
- [Choosing a Bed: Sleep Number vs Tempurpedic](#)

5 Ways Depression Costs Me In the Garden



I struggle with chronic, recurring depression. While it's well-managed, the symptoms do creep up from time to time. [Depression is an expensive mental health condition](#), in ways that might surprise you. In fact, during bouts of depression, I find that it costs me in the garden. This does mitigate the many [mental health benefits of gardening](#). However, it's an important thing to know about if you're a frugal gardener who lives with a similar mental health challenge.

5 Ways Depression Costs Me In The Garden

Here are the five most common ways that depression costs me in the garden.

1. Lack of Energy Means Slack in the Garden

A garden requires tending. Most plants need attention weekly if not daily. When this is part of a normal routine, it's

great. In fact, it's a healthy part of the day. However, sometimes, depression wins. When it does, fatigue sets in. It literally feels impossible to get up out of the bed to do anything at all. If that happens, then gardening doesn't. And this can mean the plants wither and die.

2. What's The Point Anyway?

That refrain runs through my head when I'm dealing with a bout of depression. Depression is characterized by hopelessness and pointlessness and a lack of interest in doing things normally enjoyed. It's really hard to stay motivated to work in the garden when you can't see the point of doing it. Again, this means that the garden withers and dies.

If we can overcome these feelings (through medication, therapy, self-care, and other means,) then the growth and beauty of the garden can remind us of the point. But, sometimes, depression takes over.

3. Low Self-Esteem or Black/White Thinking

For me, depression is accompanied by a feeling of worthlessness. Some people experience black and white thinking because of their mental health conditions. In either case, this can lead to feeling like you aren't good enough to make a garden grow. A plant starts to die, I feel like "I don't know how to garden," and I just give up.

Someone who loves gardening might see a small mistake in the garden and suddenly hate gardening. We lose the joy as we lose ourselves in depression. So, we abandon the garden. Or we get in there and rip it up entirely, destroying what we spent time and money creating.

4. Reckless Shopping

Although this is more commonly a characteristic of mania in bipolar depression, people, like myself, with unipolar depression, can fall into wasteful shopping as well. For me, it's usually online shopping. I'm imagining some other life I want to have where I'm not depressed, and I'm allowing the easy mindlessness of the scroll to convince me that I just need this gadget or that to feel better. So, suddenly, I find myself buying new garden tools, plants, or a gardening apron that I can't afford and won't ever use.

5. Injuries

Ideally, I work through the challenges and overcome them and get back to doing things that I love. However, sometimes, when you push through before you're ready, you end up injuring yourself. If you're in the brain fog of depression while working with gardening tools, then you might injure yourself. This can cost me in medical care as well as lost work.

Tips for Coping

There are many amazing benefits of gardening. It's just sometimes hard to remember them in the throes of depression. It's helpful for me to keep lists of things I love, what the benefits are, little stories or photos that remind me of the good parts, etc. Then I look at those in depression to try to help myself overcome the inertia and get back to myself.

Read More:

- [7 Reasons Why You Should Try Gardening](#)
- [If You're Over 50, Here's Why You Should Start Gardening](#)
- [7 Financial Benefits of Backyard Gardening](#)

Quotes About the Benefits of Gardening



There are so many benefits of gardening. Many of them relate to frugal living. For example, gardens remind us to enjoy the little things, rather than spending money on flashy stuff. The following quotes about the benefits of gardening remind me of the important stuff.

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature.

To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul.” – Alfred Austin

If you enjoy frugal gardening, then you spend barely anything at all except time in your garden. It doesn't cost much to feel dirt on your hands and sunshine on your skin. And yet, the benefits are immeasurable. Your body as well as your mind will thank you.

“I like gardening—it's a place where I find myself when I need to lose myself.” – Alice Sebold

We often try to tackle life's problems and challenges by ruminating on them. However, at times, this just makes things worse. Gardening gets us outside of our heads, into our bodies, into the greater world around us. This often points us to creative solutions we could never have just thought up in words.

“Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help.” – May Sarton

We rush through so many moments of our lives, missing out on much of their beauty. However, you can't rush gardening. The plants work in their own time. You must work at them diligently, daily. As a result, you learn patience. You might also learn to reap the benefits of mindfulness.

“Gardening simply does not allow one to be mentally old, because too

many hopes and dreams are yet to be realized.” – Allan Armitage

Of course, people of all ages enjoy gardening. However, over the years, I've often especially enjoyed learning about elderly people who garden. The activity and planning and experience all contribute to keeping the mind young. And I love this idea about how the garden offers hope and that keeps you excited about what's to come. After all, the bulbs you just planted aren't flowering yet.

“I can think of no better form of personal involvement in the cure of the environment than that of gardening.

A person who is growing a garden, if he is growing it organically, is improving a piece of the world.”- Wendell Berry

One of the greatest benefits of gardening is that it allows us to contribute to improving the planet in our own small way. We can't control the entire world and the choices made there. However, we can control our own choices. When we choose organic, natural, slow, frugal gardening, we make our corner of the world a little bit better. When we share that, we encourage others to do the same. This is how change happens.

Michael Pollan addresses the same thing above in a different way:

“The single greatest lesson the

garden teaches is that our relationship to the planet need not be zero-sum ...

and that as long as the sun still shines and people still can plan and plant, think and do, we can, if we bother to try, find ways to provide for ourselves without diminishing the world.”

And finally, **Minnie Aumonier** puts it more succinctly:

“When the world wearies and society fails to satisfy, there is always the garden.”

Quotes sourced from [Treehugger](#)

Read More:

- [Garden Photo Walks for Mindfulness](#)
- [A Garden to Dye For](#)
- [5 Fun Ways to Use Yarn in the Garden](#)

7 Reasons Why You Should Try Gardening



Have you thought about trying gardening for a long time? What's holding you back? Sometimes people worry that they won't be good at it, that it's expensive, or that they don't have the time to do it properly. However, you can always start small and grow your garden later if you want to it. It's worth a try. Here are seven good reasons why you should try gardening.

1. Gardening Is Good For Your Mental Health

Many people started gardening or keeping plants during the pandemic. This is no coincidence. Gardening offers a variety of different [mental health benefits](#). It's a hands-on activity that keeps you focused and grounded, which reduces stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. Growing something from seed helps you feel like you have a purpose and boosts self-confidence. Moreover, simply having plants around you has been shown to be good for your mental health. Feeling better is one of the most popular reasons why you should try gardening.

2. Gardening Is Also Good For Your Physical Health

Getting out into the garden and moving your body in the sun is good for you. Even if you just enjoy a small garden on the deck or an indoor garden, the daily ritual of getting up and caring for the plants is good for you. If you eat healthy fruits and vegetables from your own garden, this can improve your overall health as well.

Additionally, when you're gardening, you aren't on your devices. Reducing screen time has both mental and physical health benefits.

3. Gardening Is Good For Families

You can definitely enjoy gardening on your own. However, it's also a terrific family activity. [Research shows](#) that gardens are a safe space where families unify and bond. Kids learn responsibility. The entire family grows together. It's a great experience for people of all ages.

4. Gardening Is Fun

Gardening offers an affordable, consistent form of entertainment. It's a great way to pass the time. If you're looking for good reasons why you should try gardening, the fact that it gives you something enjoyable to do every day should be at the top of your list.

5. There Might Be Financial Benefits

At Frugal Gardening, we're all about the fact that gardening doesn't have to be a costly endeavor. Moreover, you might

actually experience [financial benefits of gardening](#). You can reduce your grocery bill, grow your own gifts for people, and maybe even start a small business selling what you grow!

6. You Can Build Community

Getting outside in your yard might mean that you connect more with your neighbors as they pass by. Alternatively, you might join a community garden, allowing you to really get to know the people living near you. Or you might engage in seed swapping, attend local gardening lectures, etc. These are all great ways to build community. Community has lots of benefits.

7. There Isn't A Significant Downside

We can think of so many reasons why you should try gardening. More than that, though, we can't really think of many reasons not to. If you try it and you don't like it, there's really no harm done. So, why not give it a try?

Read More:

- [5 Fun Hobbies To Keep You Busy This Winter](#)
- [4 Reasons To Grow Flowers In Your Garden](#)
- [5 Reasons To Start a Garden This Spring](#)