

# 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](#)

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# The Essence Of The Garden





This week I want to take a step back and talk a bit about the essence of the garden.

You might be thinking: Huh? What are you talking about?

As frugal gardeners—and I think this is true of most gardeners—we look at the garden in a practical, utilitarian manner. How much food can I get out of this small plot of land? How can I maximize my harvest? Can I make my front yard look fabulous on a budget?

But a garden is so much more than just a place to grow food (or plant pretty [flowers](#)!)

It's a place to take a breather, to take in the world, to enjoy peace and quiet, to appreciate life, and to watch what's going on around you. I think we forget this sometimes. And it's a shame! Frugal gardeners are all about making the most of what we have on hand, aren't we? So we should make time to appreciate the garden space for all its incredible qualities.

And it's possible to do this even if your garden consists of a single potted tomato.

You don't need to feel bad if your garden isn't frilly and fancy. There's no need to have an extravagant English garden to enjoy your time there. Pull up a chair—the comfiest you have—and spend a moment among the plants.

You don't need to be working every minute. You can appreciate the garden for what it is without toiling away.

This year, I left my garden behind. I planted a few things in the spring, but depression took over and left me with little motivation and energy to do the things I needed for the garden to flourish. I harvested some peppers, cherry tomatoes, and kale, but that's about it. For a brief moment, I thought to myself. Maybe this is it. Perhaps I'm done with gardening.

And I quickly realized that was a nonsense thought. I'm lucky to have this space full of bright sunlight, teeming with creatures. Whether I return to the full gardening experience

or I continue to take an extended break, I'm aware that there's something to be gained from simply going out there and breathing in the fresh air.

The garden isn't just a place where I plant things. It's a place where I observe life in action. Even if I'm not actively planting, there's plenty of action to notice, from squirrels bounding among the branches of the grand maple tree to birds chittering as they make secret plans to head south.

And so my challenge to you this week is to take a moment in your garden where you stop, pull up a chair, and just sit there. Watch the critters take their last nibbles of plants and pollen before the colder weather sets in. Smell the air as it changes from warm to chilly. Feel the sun on your face. And enjoy the essence of the garden.

Whether that's sitting on a balcony, hanging out next to a potted [tomato](#) plant, or laying out in the grass.

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## **A Frugal Gardener Is a Patient Gardener**





Spring has sprung! Kind of. Last week where I am in zone 5 Canada, we were hit with a surprise snowstorm. Many people expected a light dusting and for the snow to melt right away, but it stuck around for several days. I know at least one gardener who got a nasty surprise when the snow hit suddenly. They lost a lot of their newly planted seedlings to frost and had to start all over again. I know spring is an exciting time, but it's important to be a patient gardener.

## The Importance of Being a Patient Gardener

Being a patient gardener sounds boring, doesn't it? I'm with you. I used to be all about taking big risks in the garden, planting my [tomatoes](#) early when there was still a chance of frost, and hoping that protection would keep them safe. I've had some successes using risky techniques, but I've also had lots of disappointments and failures.

Ultimately, those failures also mean losing money. It takes so much time and effort to grow seedlings indoors. Without a

dedicated space to do so, I have to turn my basement into a grow-op. This requires sacrificing space and adjusting my routines. It also means investing time—and we all know that time is money—into checking on and taking care of seedlings. It took me a while to equate the effort I put into growing seedlings with money, but now I'm well aware of the connection. I am a lot more careful about transplanting. I harden off [seedlings](#) carefully, and I check the weather obsessively before putting any frost-sensitive plants out.

Waiting doesn't mean I miss out on the gardening season. It means that I'm not worried every second that surprise snow or frost will kill my precious seedlings.

## How To Be a Patient Gardener

I didn't become a patient gardener overnight. It takes some work! It also requires making mistakes. By losing plants to bad weather early on in the season, I was able to see how much easier waiting would make my life.

Now, I am much more conservative in my planting schedules. I use planting charts for my zone found online, and if they say to plant out stuff a week after the first frost, I wait a little longer—just in case.

Scaling back my garden has also helped to make me a lot less impatient. When you're scrambling to get everything into the ground, it's easy to get caught up and plant things out too early. A few years ago, I had so many tomato plants that were outgrowing their shelving space, and I had a variety of lettuce and squash that would quickly need to take their place under the lights. I panicked and put the tomatoes out early. They survived, but I remember the yield being bad that year.

But how many tomatoes I netted wasn't really the problem. I hated being stressed and worried at the start of the gardening season. Spring is supposed to be a time of excitement and

wonder about the season ahead.

This year, try slowing down. A little patience goes a long way.

**Read More**

[Yes, you can garden for free](#)

[Ten ways to get free plants for your garden](#)

[How to get free plants](#)

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## Go With The Flow Gardening



Spring is here! I remember at this time last year, we were at the start of this pandemic and I was so excited to start the gardening season. It was too cold to start planting, but I had

a ton of stuff started in my basement, and I was slowly starting to harden things off. This year, it's unusually warm, and I haven't started a single thing. It's my first year doing this type of *go-with-the-flow* gardening. I'm not sticking to strict schedules, and I don't have any intention of starting seeds indoors. I don't have the energy. I'm happy for everyone who is discovering gardening now, but I'm taking a little break. I'm not ignoring my garden completely, but I've decided to keep things a little bit more *laissez-faire*. This year, I'm growing a few edibles, but mostly I'll be planting food for bees and pollinators.

I'm not giving up on gardening. I still do plenty of gardening indoors (my hydroponic garden has been supplying me with a lot of food through the winter), and I'm caring for lots of [houseplants](#). Gardening has always given me a lot of joy. But I could tell that I was in no place to commit the time and effort to my usual intense efforts this year. I feared that forcing myself to do it would only make me unhappy and turn me against my favorite pastime. Instead of seeing this year as a failure, I'm looking forward to the experiment. I'm excited to grow different flowers and see how many pollinators I can entice into the garden. If I'm spending less time picking off cabbage loopers and other pesky pests, maybe I'll have time for other projects like finally putting down a pathway between my garden beds.

How about you? Are you taking it easy this summer? Or are you diving right in? I'd love to hear about your gardening adventures. Let me know in the comments what you plan to grow this year!

## Reducing waste

Of course, even though my garden activities will be more laid back this year, I still had the urge to order some seeds. I went with quick-growing, easy-to-care-for options. One of my other goals this year, besides taking things easy, is to



reduce [food waste](#). Wasting food is basically throwing money in the trash, so I'm determined to limit waste in our household *and* garden. Even the most fastidious gardeners tend to waste food [before it hits their fridge or plate](#). Before you throw yourself into the full swing of things, I implore you to plan out not just what you're planting but how you plan to use it. Are you growing lots of kale and don't really eat that much of it? Make sure you have a friend or neighbor you can gift it to. Accidentally planted too many tomatoes? Get ready for the harvest and find yourself a tomato sauce recipe for when all those fruits ripen.

And, if, like me, you're doing a version of go with the flow gardening. Plant less than you usually do, and make sure you use up every bit of what you grow. If you're planting tons of flowers, feel free to cut a few and put them on display in your home.

Are you a regular frugal gardener whose feeling out of sorts this year? Try some go-with-the-flow gardening. Keep it simple, and don't be afraid to lessen the load.

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## How I Feel About the Hunting of Garden Pests



I've never had to deal with deer fussing about in my garden, but I have had plenty of squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, gophers, and cats use my raised beds as their very own buffet, walking path, and toilet. I'm speaking from my own limited experience here. But I've never felt comfortable with the idea of hunting garden [pests](#).

I used to live in a busy suburban neighborhood where the squirrels reigned supreme. Now, I live in a small community that borders rural land. There are more trees here and plenty of wildlife. Every year, I have to grapple with pests (insects and mammals, alike) enjoying my fresh produce as their own.

It's infuriating. All that effort gone when a squirrel decides to take a small chomp out of every bean [seedling](#). All that effort gone when birds get to seeds before they can even sprout. All that effort gone when a rabbit chows down on my lettuce that I've managed to protect from early bolting. All that effort when a cat decides my garden beds are its personal litter box. All that effort when something – and I can't be



sure what – decides to uproot whatever it wants in the middle of the night seemingly just for fun.

You'd think I'd be on board with hunting to get rid of garden pests, but I'm not. I recognize that hungry critters can really ruin the gardening season if they're relentless enough, but I have the same attitude towards animal pests as I do insect critters and weeds.

## **Taking up space**

We are in their space. Humans have taken up residence where once there was nothing but nature abound. It is not my right to delete these creatures to fit my idea of the perfect garden. Instead, I try my very best to work around the nuisance.

I have a different approach to an indoor invasion, granted, but that's mainly because indoor pests pose a more significant threat to household members' health and safety.

Outside, I'm not the boss. I try to work with Mother Nature, not against her. For one, I don't feel morally comfortable killing animals to make my life easier in the context of gardening. It's my hobby. While I try to grow plenty of food to eat and save money, I won't perish if a crop gets devoured by hungry creatures. I also think there are plenty of ways to co-exist peacefully with these so-called invaders. Hunting garden pests just isn't in the cards for me.

Pest covers have really helped me stay sane this year by keeping squirrels, birds, and cabbage moths away from my delicate brassica seedlings. They've been working so well I'm considering adding them to two more beds. Barriers should be the first resort when dealing with nasty pests. I also grow extra lettuce to keep rabbits happy and out of my main beds. Most of my beds are high enough to keep small critters out, too.

Cats seem to trot whoever they please no matter what I do, but the pest covers have done wonders to keep their paws out of my beds. I even still plant catnip to invite them to visit because I enjoy the company of sweet, docile neighborhood kitties.

## Breathe and reflect

I am an impatient gardener, and even I can find a moment to take a deep breath and ask myself if getting worked up is worth it. Would it be easy to murder all the squirrels running around my plots? Absolutely! It wouldn't be psychologically simple, but it would really eliminate a big problem for me. Still, I don't think it's my right to say what belongs where.

I decided to enter the world of gardening, and I made a deal with myself that I would work with the forces of nature and not against them. Who am I to know what the consequences of my actions might be? Haven't we, as humans already made poor decisions in this regard? Pesticide use for pest control has decimated bee populations and is having important ramifications.

Yes, it's harder to take the long road. But a little effort is what it takes to grow a plant from seed in the first place. Surely, as gardeners, we have it in us to accept and handle a few extra roadblocks on our way to success.

If this kind of gardening philosophy appeals to you, I highly recommend reading Michael Pollan's book [\*Second Nature: A Gardener's Education\*](#). It's a book that changed the way I think about how I view so-called garden invaders.