

- Mental health / Stress

Study links frequent gardening to improved wellbeing and less stress

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Gardening more frequently may be linked to improvements in wellbeing, perceived stress and physical activity, new research suggests.

A new study indicates that people who garden every day have wellbeing scores 6.6% higher and stress levels 4.2% lower than people who do not garden at all.

According to the paper, gardening just two to three times a week also leads to better wellbeing and lower stress levels.

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) wellbeing fellow and lead author Dr Lauriane Chalmin-pui said: "This is the first time the 'dose response' to gardening has been tested and the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the more frequently you garden, the greater the health benefits.

"Gardening every day has the same positive impact on wellbeing than undertaking regular, vigorous exercise like cycling or running.

"When gardening, our brains are pleasantly distracted by nature.

"This shifts our focus away from ourselves and our stresses... reducing negative feelings."

According to the study published in the journal *Cities*, frequent gardening – two to three times a week – corresponded with greatest perceived health benefits.

Improving health, however, was not the prime motivator to garden, but rather the direct pleasure gardening brought to participants.

The study – conducted by the RHS in collaboration with Sheffield University and the University of Virginia – found that more frequent gardening was also linked with greater physical activity supporting the notion that gardening is good for both body and mind.

Dr Chalmin-pui added: "Gardening is like effortless exercise because it doesn't feel as strenuous as going to the gym, but we can expend similar amounts of energy.

"Most people say they garden for pleasure so the likelihood of getting hooked to gardening is also high.

"The good news is that from a mental health perspective you can't 'overdose' on gardening."

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