

# How Gardening Helps You Get a Good Night's Sleep

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Among the many benefits of gardening, the boost in your ability to get a good night's sleep is one of the best. Sleep has a paramount impact on your quality of life – if you don't get enough sleep you may not be as alert and focused the next day.

Other perks of gardening include keeping your body flexible, the bounty you enjoy (whether flowers or food) and creating a beautiful spot to boost your sense of well-being.

There's also something to be said for getting in touch with the earth. We generally live "dirt-free" lives – almost sterile in nature. But playing in the earth can be a good thing when it relaxes you and gets you ready for a restorative night's sleep.

Even if you're limited to gardening in pots, the act can have a huge impact in keeping your stress levels low and improving your mental and physical states. It's a leisure activity that most can join in and create a beautiful and happy place.

## **The Scientific Explanation**

The scientific explanation of how gardening can help you get a good night's sleep is multi-faceted and addresses all the senses – touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. The mental and physical health boost that gardening brings into your life is well documented as a positive influence to cultivate in your lifestyle.

If you're subject to bouts of mood swings and/or depression, gardening is proven to provide major improvement by addressing all the senses in a positive way. For example, digging in the dirt, tasting the bounty that you helped to grow, smelling fresh earth or plants, viewing the beauty of a well-tended garden and listening to the wind, chirp of birds and other garden sounds can help you relax and lift your mood.

Gardening is an activity that relaxes all of the senses in such a unique manner that you can't find elsewhere. Studies indicate that people who are diagnosed with depression, mood swings and bipolar disorder and spent up to six hours per week gardening flowers or vegetables show intense improvement in their symptoms.

These people reported much improved lifestyle and better habits and much more luck in getting a good night's sleep. Plus, scientists have found that a harmless bacteria (*Mycobacterium*) found in soil has the power to help release serotonin in parts of the brain having to do with mood and cognitive functioning.

While not as powerful as the medications sometimes prescribed for depression and insomnia, gardening does put back some help to your immune system that's quite lacking in our environment of today.

The exercise you get from gardening is also a scientific factor in helping you finally achieve a good night's sleep. The fresh air and sunshine are like a powerful tonic on your immune system and gets your blood flowing.

Gardening is an especially good exercise to choose if you're limited in movement. While it doesn't usually give you a cardiovascular workout, it does move your muscles with the digging, weeding, planting and other gardening tasks.

Stretching and most gardening tasks are low impact but are found to greatly help those who are in their senior years, have certain disabilities or those suffering from chronic pain.

Another plus to gardening exercise is that you'll more than likely stick to the program and get regular exercise because a garden takes tending and if you want to realize the most beauty and bounty from it, you'll want to keep up with the tasks.

Your brain health can be boosted with the exercise and other experiences you gain from gardening. Many seniors, faced with mental decline have found that simply walking through a garden is therapeutic.

Now, residential homes for those with memory problems are including gardens in their landscaping so the residents can enjoy a walk without fear from getting lost. That positive influence also extends to bedtime hours.

Your diet can also be a factor in how you sleep at night. Gardening makes you much more aware of your eating habits and gives you the opportunity to grow some foods you can eat.

Scientific surveys show that those who grow and eat much of their food from a garden are much more likely to eat healthier than non-gardeners. It's also a big factor in helping kids eat healthier. They're more likely to eat veggies and fruit they have a hand in growing.

### **The Spiritual Connection of Sleep and Gardening**

To get a peaceful night's sleep, you should have spiritual peace-of-mind. You don't have to be religious to find peace – but you do have to immerse your senses in whatever makes your spirits and your mood soar.

The sense of healing and well-being that you get from being in the great outdoors can make all the difference in relaxing your body and mind so a good night's sleep is easy to come by.

Being in tune with the universe comes from your thoughts – and it's difficult to be in a bad mood when gardening – whether you're potting an array of flowers on your patio or arranging savory herbs on a window sill, your body naturally relaxes.

If you've been chained to a computer or iPhone all day or week, you'll get a new perspective on life. Gardening can clear away the trivia from your mind and provide peace from the noisy and fast-moving world we live in today.

Gardening helps to get you in tune with your search for renewal, being one with the earth and expanding our relationship with others. The seasons of gardening keep you in tune with life's cycle – being born, planting seeds, harvesting, fighting diseases and finally, dying.

Since each and every place on earth has its own climate and geology types, you can learn about gardening experiences in various places. Gardening in Australia is very different than gardening in the United States. The hemispheres are switched and even the seasons are vastly different.

With gardening, you learn about the evolution of gardens in other parts of the world if you want and to compare it with what you're capable of in your own climate. It's a learning experience that's good for the mind and helps you become enthused about what you're doing.

When you're most happy and content is when you can get a good night's sleep without even thinking about it. Gardening is for meditation, learning, creating, touching, tasting and reveling in the wonders of nature.

### **How Gardening Helps Your Health – and Your Sleep Patterns**

A healthy body is more apt to relax and enjoy a good night's sleep than one filled with stress, overweight, stiff and sore or on powerful medications. When your body is healthy, it's much more likely your sleep will all into healthy patterns.

Gardening burns calories – how many depends on how much work can be found in your garden. If you're tending a window herb garden, you won't likely burn as many calories as if you have a large vegetable garden outdoors.

But, there are many other gardening factors that contribute to your good health besides burning calories. For example, it may reduce the chances of developing osteoporosis in your later years.

Digging, planting and weeding or any repetitive activity requiring stretching or lifting keeps muscles and bones strong and keeps them from deteriorating so rapidly. Gardening may also reduce the pain and inflammation of arthritis and other diseases, so a good night's sleep is easier to come by.

Known as one of nature's best stress busters, gardening is a leisure activity that should help you release stress and relax without the hassle of going to a gym to get the same results.

Those who garden were found to have lower levels of cortisol – a hormone produced by your body during stressful times. The smell of flowers and being around their beauty may also have an impact on your happiness and even improve your desire for socialization.

Children who are allowed to play in dirt during their early years are proven to have healthier immune systems than those whose parents were overly-concerned about getting dirty.

The “dirty” kids were found to have fewer instances of eczema, allergies and asthma as the years passed. Without the bother of these symptoms to wake you up constantly, you’ll get a good night’s sleep.

Vitamin D is one of the best reasons for gardening. Vitamin D comes most abundantly from the sun and when you’re gardening, you’ll love the feeling of the warm rays that add so much to your health. Just make sure you pre-plan for times you might be subjected to sunburn.

Your health is vitally important to your sleep habits. The healing and calming powers of gardening help to keep you healthy - as does the warmth of the sun on a beautiful morning.

### **Gardening Therapy Can Turn Your Life Around**

Whether you’re an outdoor or indoor gardener, the process of digging, planting and harvesting can turn your life around for the better by helping you get healthy and have a better outlook on life – and that includes getting a good night’s sleep.

Your life can’t be very much fun if you’re sleepy and worn out when you could be having fun. Gardening indoors or outdoors is super therapy for almost all that ails you. Indoor gardens and plants bring color and much-needed oxygen into your home.

Outdoor gardening provides Vitamin D, helps you absorb calcium to your bones and keeps your body limber. Interacting with nature can also influence your mindset and your spiritual needs.

Gardening effects are restorative and help you move away from the pressures, stress and demands you may experience during the day. Try relaxing with a book or some soft music or friends in an outdoor garden you created yourself – surrounded by plants, earth, rocks, water features and color.

It's just a sampling of the way gardening and the results of gardening can help you get a good night's sleep. Even the plants involved with gardening can help you relax and put you in the mood for some shut eye.

Lavender, basil and mint have lovely scents for your home and garden and may even be used in your favorite recipes. Studies also show that gardening is especially good for those who are planning surgical procedures.

The speed of recovery partially depends on your environment. If you can get out to some fresh sunshine and the sound, scent and touch of beautiful plants in your garden, you'll feel more like getting the rest you need for a full recovery.

Gardening has been compared by some therapist as a "working vacation." The rest it allows for the body and mind is like a gift of time to be by yourself and with yourself. If you're having trouble sleeping, the problem could be that your mind has no time to rest.

Stress may be interfering with every aspect of your life – and when stress is that prevalent, loss of sleep will likely occur. Gardening is a combination of exercise and manna for the mind and body.

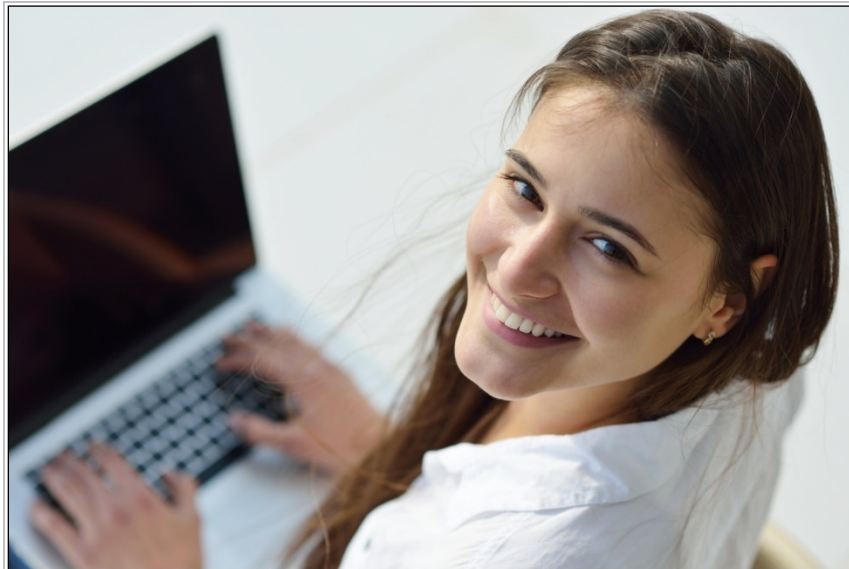
Studies indicate that only thirty minutes per day in the garden can encourage a full eight hours of quality sleep per night. If you're having trouble sleeping, both your body and mind is trying to tell you something.

Take the hint and change your lifestyle to one that's more conducive to getting a good night's sleep. Changes such as getting more time outdoors and being more relaxed at bedtime are the best sleep aids – much better than taking prescription medications that can be harmful to your health.

Gardening can also be tonic for the soul. If you're feeling down and out, angry or frustrated when you go to bed, try a bit of gardening activity for a few minutes before retiring to see what difference it can make in the way you view your surroundings and the world.

You can open a new world by taking up gardening. Whether you have a windowsill or a large plot for your green thumb, plan carefully to plant what makes

you happy, restores your senses and well-being – and helps you experience the sweet dreams you deserve.



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