



# Gardening 101

## Why is Gardening Beneficial?

**April is National Garden Month, let's explore why we should get out there and grow our own!**

### 01. Feel the Connection

Feel the connection to the food you grow and the possibilities that await. You get to decide what you grow and what you can make with it! This can help foster a connection with the food you eat.

### 02. Heal the Environment

Your body will thank you, and your environment will thank you, too! Your garden may attract birds, bees, butterflies, moths; all important creatures that help pollinate and benefit the global food supply. Plants and trees help eliminate carbon in the air and replace it with oxygen, creating a healthier environment!

### 03. Stress Management

April is also Stress Awareness month. Gardening is a mental health activity that will reduce stress. Touching the soil and interacting with your environment activates your parasympathetic nervous system which can help you relax. The absorption of vitamin D via exposure to sunlight has been shown to reduce stress as well!

### 04. Engage in Mindful Movement

Working in your garden is a form of mindful movement, and wouldn't you know it ... April is also National Move More month. Gardening can help improve your physical strength and stamina.

### 05. Ensure Quality of Food

You can grow quality fruits, vegetables, and herbs that are a part of a nutritious, well-rounded diet and provide fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants!

## TIPS TO START

- Consider your climate, and choose crops that will thrive in it.
- Locate your garden in an area that will acquire the most sunlight exposure
- Know your soil, and prepare it for planting—remove roots, grass, and other plants, and turn over your soil
- Make sure your soil is well drained (we do live in Washington after all); you can plant your crops in raised beds or in a well-sloped location

**"I like the connection of gardening and being able to pass these skills down on a generational level and share the activity with my children. I also like that it's a more sustainable (and cheaper) way to enjoy nutritious food."**  
**Chef Cody Shipley, CNS Manager at Mason General Hospital**