

Keep Gardening!!

By: Sarah Adams

Member of the Big Country Master Gardeners

With the dog days of summer setting in, I wanted to write an article reminding all of us why we grow a garden in the first place. The middle of July is not when one starts a garden for many obvious reasons; however, it does still get me outside and reminds me that even on the hottest days there are still cool-ish hours to enjoy. And sometimes – many times - life is just too hectic and I do not make it outside until the hottest hours of the day. On those days I have to remind myself of some reasons I started this garden in the first place. This article is for the gardeners who are wondering how we got ourselves in this predicament of tending plants in the heat. So, let me remind us all of the joys and benefits of gardening:

1. Stress reduction: Gardening has been shown to reduce stress and promote relaxation. Spending time in nature, connecting with plants, and engaging in repetitive tasks like weeding can have a calming effect on the mind, reducing anxiety and improving mental well-being.

2. Mental stimulation: Gardening offers intellectual stimulation as it requires planning, problem-solving, and learning about different plant species, their needs, and growth habits. It can boost cognitive function and keep the mind active.

3. Connection with nature: Gardening provides an opportunity to connect with the natural world and develop a deeper appreciation for the environment. Spending time outdoors, observing the growth and life cycles of plants, and nurturing them can foster a sense of connection and stewardship towards nature.

4. Food production and self-support: Growing your own fruits, vegetables, and herbs allows you to have access to fresh, organic produce. It promotes a sustainable lifestyle, reduces reliance on store-bought food, and encourages self-sufficiency.

5. Improved nutrition: Having a garden can lead to a healthier diet. Growing your own fruits and vegetables ensures access to fresh, nutrient-rich produce, promoting a diet filled with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

6. Creativity and self-expression: Gardening allows for creativity and self-expression in designing and arranging plants, selecting color schemes, and creating unique outdoor spaces. It provides a canvas for artistic expression and personalization.

7. Environmental benefits: Gardens contribute to a healthier environment. Plants help improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. They also provide habitats for beneficial insects, birds, and other wildlife, promoting biodiversity.

8. Sense of accomplishment: Witnessing the growth and blooming of plants that you have nurtured from seeds or cuttings can provide a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. It instills a sense of achievement and boosts self-esteem.

9. Community engagement: Gardening can be a social activity that fosters connections with others who share similar interests. It offers opportunities to participate in community gardens, plant swaps, or horticultural events, promoting social engagement and a sense of belonging.

These are just a few of the many benefits that come with having a garden. Whether it's a small backyard plot or a collection of potted plants on a balcony, gardening offers a multitude of rewards for both the body and mind. It is worth having one even during the hottest time of the year!

And here are a few tips for staying cool outside:

1. Dress for the heat: Opt for loose-fitting, lightweight, and breathable clothing made from natural fabrics like cotton or linen. Light colors reflect sunlight and help keep you cooler. Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

2. Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated. In hot weather, your body loses more fluids through sweat, so it's crucial to replenish them. Carry a water bottle with you and sip on water regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty.

3. Plan your outside activity: In between tasks, seek shade, wear sunscreen, and take frequent breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas. Remember to take your time and be happy with what you accomplish and not dwell on what you did not get done. The cooler days will return when you can work for longer periods outdoors.

If you have any gardening questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you will like us on Facebook and visit bcmgtx.org for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!