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HOME & GARDEN

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Reap more than flowers from your garden

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BY KATHY VAN MULLEKOM
Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

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Gardening is good for you in many ways. Besides giving you better views to enjoy, gardening improves your physical, nutritional and mental health. Here's how, according to Bonnie Plants, a label you'll see on many vegetable and herb plants available for spring and summer planting.

Power of sunlight

When you work in the yard, the sun helps the body make vitamin D, which is essential for healthy bones and can reduce risk for osteoporosis. The positive powers of sunlight also work on the mind.

Physical fitness

To reap the benefits of gardening, you have to do more than just patter about. The most energetic activities in terms of calories used are digging and shoveling. If you spend 30 minutes on either of these activities, you burn 200-360 calories.

Staying mentally alert

Gardening gives you an opportunity to exercise your mind and your hands, and there's always something new to learn from your garden.

Reducing stress levels

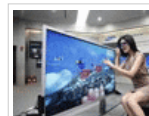
Researchers find that just walking through a beautiful sensory garden lowers stress levels. The sensory garden is thought to have the same effects on the mind as art therapy. Soaking up the colors, sounds and smells of your garden and taking time to appreciate the peace and tranquility also removes tension.

Better nutrition

Gardening also provides you with good-tasting fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs, which stimulate the heart and get the blood flowing, making your mind and body work better together as one.

They also decrease the deterioration of an aging mind, and they are powerful in antioxidants which can help your body fight diseases.

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