

Practising mindfulness through gardening

For an avid gardener, what a joy it is to watch saplings grow and thrive from their seedbeds! Your garden can give you a comforting space to contemplate and release stress. Gardening is a wonderful way to discover inner peace. And this is what mindfulness is about—being fully present and aware of what is occurring inside and outside of ourselves. Hence, gardening and mindfulness perfectly complement each other.

Whether you are planting seeds, pruning bushes, or merely smelling the flowers you can turn your complete attention to the sights, smells, and textures of the gardening tasks at hand and forget about the anxiety of the day. Thus, gardening can help you to de-stress and relax, offering you a sense of peace and calmness.

Nowadays, we all are used to seeing the concrete around us but how often do we attempt to connect with nature and take a breather by slowing down? Rarely do we gaze at the green trees and shrubs that stand against the vast blue sky! In the words of Tagore, "From blooming garden" we gather "fragrant memories of vanished flowers". It is by returning to nature, we can find serenity and connect with something primary within ourselves.

Gardening can be a healing act, and it helps us to feel more grounded. In fact, immersing yourself in a green landscape comes with a list of science-backed benefits. A research study found that exposure to green space can have a positive impact on both physical



and mental health, improving mood, cortisol levels, and heart rate.

A few solitary hours in nature would bless anyone with the time to turn towards introspection. To feel emotionally balanced, we need a place to think and find peace. Gardening at home gives us that space along with fresh vegetables and fruits.

In the book, *Gardenland: Nature, Fantasy and Everyday Practice*, author Jennifer Wren Atkinson explains that gardening can help us manage stress, allowing us to think of alternatives to problems and form a connection to our inner selves.

Mindfulness is all about focusing and engaging with the task at hand without the distraction of thoughts. When you

immerse yourself in a refreshing space like a garden—filled with fragrant flowers and buzzing insects—you can easily slow down the mind and focus on what you are experiencing at that moment.

Gardening teaches us how to be patient and curious. By taking care of plants, we learn to appreciate the beauty of life—as it takes time for plants to grow and bloom, we start seeing how small changes in our environment make big differences over time. Hence, for those who find it difficult to cope with changes, regularly recording the variations in nature can aid in becoming more accepting towards it.

No matter whether you are a seasoned gardener or starting to practice gardening, you can be a mindful gardener. If you already have a garden, take the time to appreciate how you have cultivated this beautiful space. However, if you are just



starting to create, stop worrying about when your garden will be finished and enjoy this rewarding journey.

Notice how the texture of the soil feels between your fingers; the beauty of knotted roots, and the softness and sweet smell of the flowers. These all are gifts to us from mother nature, and it all waits for you to relish.

Often, we ignore the simple yet extraordinary beauty and joy that surround us. Gardening can help us to notice them. We can recover the peace that modern aspects of life—long office hours, painful traffic jams, and computer screens—steal from us through gardening. Appreciate the green grass beneath your feet. Trust me, you will not find a better mat to meditate on than this!

By Ayman Anika
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