

# GARDENING MADE EASY FOR SENIORS: 10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY ACTIVELY GARDENING



No matter your age or the color of your thumb, gardening is a wonderful hobby that provides numerous benefits for mind, body and spirit. Whether you've planted a thousand seeds and grown all your own food, or you've never touched a trowel, there are ways to make growing your own flowers and vegetables simple and attainable. Start with these tips on gardening made easy for seniors.

## *1. Limber up before digging down.*

Whether you're an Olympic athlete or a senior gardener, stretching before working can help you avoid injury and soreness. By doing just a few simple stretches, you can prepare your body for the movements gardening will require and reduce morning-after soreness.

## *2. Put safety first.*

Gardening is a rewarding hobby, and it can be easy to get so caught up in your work that going inside for a drink of water slips your mind. That's why it's always a good idea to keep a water bottle at hand and hydrate regularly.

It's also a good idea to keep a cell phone on your person at all times, and have someone check up on you periodically. Better yet, garden with a partner so you can look out for each other, and remind each other to sit when you're feeling tired and hydrate regularly.

While working in the garden, proper clothing can also keep you safe and comfortable. Wear gloves to protect your hands, closed-toed shoes to protect your feet, and a hat to help shield you from the sun's UV rays.

### ***3. Level the playing field with a walkway.***

No matter your age, an uneven walkway can trip you up. The easy solution is to keep your garden safe by making sure your path is level and free of any debris that could catch you by surprise.

### ***4. Bring the garden to you with raised beds and containers.***

Save yourself the walk to the garden by placing a raised garden bed right outside your door. Perhaps the ultimate in easy gardening for seniors, a table-height raised garden bed will eliminate the need for bending and kneeling. You can buy a raised bed kit or custom-make one to exactly the height, size, style, material and color you want.

If you don't have the space or the resources for full garden beds, container gardening is another easy option. You can use pots of any size or shape, as long as they're suitable for what you want to plant and have good drainage to keep roots from rotting. With container gardening, you can even grow herbs indoors!

### ***5. Get a grip with gardening tools for seniors.***

Not all tools are created equal, so it's important to make sure the ones you're using are right for you. Weight, size, grip, and durability are all factors to consider to get the most use out of your tools while also avoiding injury or discomfort.

Your tools should be light enough that you can easily carry and use them without causing strain or injury. Handles with good grips can keep your hands from tiring out so quickly. Some companies even make grips designed for arthritic hands. The size of your tools can also help with grip. If they're too large or too small, they can leave your fingers sore, and handles that are too short can mean more bending and back pain. Lastly, lightweight doesn't have to mean flimsy. Opt for lightweight metal, rubber or wooden tools over thin plastics that can be light but prone to breaking.

### ***6. Sit pretty with a garden bench.***

Much like choosing your gardening tools, your garden bench should be the appropriate size for you, lightweight enough that you can move it with little effort, and sturdy enough to withstand the elements. Unlike with gardening tools,

however, plastic can be a great option, as it has good outdoor durability while usually being fairly lightweight. Your bench doesn't even have to be fancy. A five-gallon bucket with a handle can be used to carry tools to the garden, and then turned over to make a stool. You can even add a small pillow or cushion for added comfort. A plastic folding step-stool can also do the trick, and most have a built-in handle for carrying.

### ***7. Just say no to high-maintenance plants.***

While annuals are lovely, they can also be high-maintenance, as they must be replanted every year. Perennials such as gaillardia, or blanket flower, will not only come back year after year, but also do well in Alabama's climate. Low-maintenance shrubs like oak leaf hydrangeas also thrive in many locations and add beautiful pops of color to any yard. By choosing low-maintenance shrubs and perennials, you can create a beautiful garden that you'll enjoy for years to come with only a fraction of the work.

### ***8. Let the tools do the work.***

Use tools to do the work for you — or at least make it easier. For example, you can use a riding lawn mower to haul heavier items or turn old containers into planters. Gardening tools for seniors don't have to break the bank. By utilizing and repurposing the tools you already have, you'll not only save money, but you'll also feel accomplished while doing it.

### ***9. Good help isn't so hard to find.***

While being completely self-sufficient can have its rewards, a helping hand at the right time can make gardening more enjoyable. Reach out to family members or friends to assist with more difficult or strenuous tasks. If there's a young person in your life, consider asking them for help. As you work together, you'll have the opportunity to share your knowledge and nurture a love of gardening in the next generation. And that could turn into a wonderful bonding experience.

### ***10. Attitude is everything.***

You're never "too old" to do anything you set your mind to, and attitude is often the key. Be willing to adjust your expectations and adapt physical tasks to match your abilities; this way you can enjoy the process, rather than attempting something that could result in frustration or even injury. Stay positive and remember to enjoy the fruits of your labor — whatever that may be.

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