

GARDENING TIPS



Denise Rodriguez, M.S. - County Extension Agent
301 Manny Martinez Sr. Drive, 2nd Floor, El Paso, TX 79905
Ph: 915-771-2354 Fax: 915-771-2356
* <http://elp.tamu.edu/horticulture>

CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE GARDEN (and why you should!)

One of the best ways to support both yourself and the planet is to plant a garden! Regardless of how much space you have, your gardening skill level, or your mobility, you can reap the benefits of a garden!

Not sure if gardening is right for you? Consider the following benefits:

- **Increased dexterity and hand strength** – Between digging holes, pruning plants, and pulling weeds, you will inevitably use your hands in many different ways. This can help to keep your hand muscles both vigorous and agile as you age.
- **Increased mental functioning** – While the causes are not entirely understood, gardening engages all of the senses, and provides gardeners with a sense of purpose, which may help slow mental decline.
- **Increased overall physical health** – Not only does gardening require physical activity – an obvious benefit to gardeners – but it also typically requires getting outside and getting your hands dirty. Exposing your skin to 10 minutes of direct sunlight (without sunscreen, but not any longer!) each day will provide you with sufficient Vitamin D to greatly reduce your risk of many diseases, including osteoporosis and heart disease. Getting dirt directly on your skin is also suspected to provide benefits in maintaining healthy immune function.
- **Increased mood and decreased stress** – Both physical exercise and time spent outdoors are proven to decrease levels of cortisol, the hormone that is released when there are times of stress. Combined with the intrinsic reward of seeing the garden grow as a result of one's efforts, gardeners are not likely to give up on their gardens as they might with other forms of exercise. For those who prefer not to meditate, gardening can also provide many of the same benefits!

There are many ways to reap the benefits of gardening, despite any physical limitations!

1. **Consider where you want to garden:** Gaining access to one's yard, especially with a wheelchair or walker, is not always an easy task. Luckily, ramps, outdoor stair lifts, and platform lifts are all affordable options to provide safe access to nearly any outdoor areas! It may also be helpful to lay pavers or have a concrete pathway added to create a level surface leading from the home to the garden. Perhaps your yard is not right for gardening, or you live in an apartment? You can easily create small gardens in planter boxes on your deck or patio, or even keep smaller potted plants on a windowsill inside!

2. **Consider your specific physical abilities:** Having a garden does not have to require large amounts of kneeling or bending down. Smaller gardens can be hung in baskets or placed on tables at a comfortable height. If you are interested in a raised garden bed, they can be created at a comfortable height that can be reached from a chair or wheelchair. If you will be sitting down while tending your garden, consider how far you can reach, and be sure to keep your plants within a comfortable range and your garden bed narrow enough so you are not straining to tend to your plants.
3. **Consider your strength and dexterity:** According to the Christopher Reeve Foundation, long-handled tools are ideal for those with limited hand and arm movement. You can also use softer, lightweight soil that reduces the amount of strength needed to dig and plant in your garden. A variety of specialized tools and equipment are available that can help you make the most of your garden.
4. **Consider what you want to plant:** Perennial, annual, flowering, edible, full-sun, drought-resistant – when it comes to variety, there is no shortage of plants! If you are planting outdoors, look into your hardiness zone or get information through El Paso County Master Gardeners to determine which plants will work in your region. You will also want to assess how much sunlight your garden receives, as well as other factors such as: how much space the plants will need once they are fully grown, water requirements, and maintenance requirements.
5. **Consider asking for help:** The initial stages of getting your planters or raised garden beds in place and full of soil can be laborious, so don't be afraid to ask for help from a family member or neighbor, or work with a trusted landscaper!

Modified From: <http://101mobility.com/blog/how-to-create-an-accessible-garden-and-why-you-should/>



Find us online:
txmg.org/elpaso



**El Paso
Master Gardeners**



epmastergardener

Revised: March 2020

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.
The Texas A&M University Systems, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

We request that you contact our office at (915) 771-2354 at least one week in advance to advise us of the auxiliary aid or service you will require.