

Plants, Gardening May Help Relieve Anxiety, Keep Kids Busy

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, March 22, 2020

Q: In the wake of master gardener meetings and events being postponed or canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic — including Shasta College's spring workshop and plant giveaway — here are some ideas for alternative activities and emotional therapy through plant care.

A: With major changes and lots of unknowns there is always anxiety. I would like to remind folks of the many benefits of plants and interacting with nature during this time of social distancing.

During your day take a few minutes to tend to your house plants, take a walk in the yard or take a virtual tour of a botanical garden.

Besides the obvious benefits of providing us with food and the oxygen that we breathe, studies show that just having a few potted plants in your workspace or home can improve overall happiness and stress reduction.

One Kansas State University study found that patients that had plants in their hospital rooms reported less pain, had lower heart rates and blood pressure, less fatigue and anxiety and recovered sooner.

Other studies show that having access to a garden space at a hospital or a school helped to lower blood pressure, improve mental attentiveness, lower levels of anxiety, and improve a person's overall happiness and wellbeing.

There are a number of studies that show even viewing pictures of plants or nature can help reduce stress.

During this time of working from home, you might also think about starting a garden, even if it is only a few plants in some containers on the patio or in your windowsill.

Studies have repeatedly shown that tending to plants can help take our minds off stressful stuff and have an overall calming effect on the mind and body.

In addition to helping with stress, several studies have shown that interacting with plants and actively gardening can help boost the immune system and improve recovery from illness.

Even if you tend to have a “black thumb” and kill most plants, there is a wonderful sense of accomplishment when you see a seed sprouting or a new leaf on your house plant. The science is pretty clear that we are happier and healthier when we are working with plants.

Plants can lift up the spirit of your house—but some can actually hurt you. These 5 plants are deadly to you, your kids, and your pets, so watch out! Reviewed.com

Here are some resources to get you started in gardening if you are new to gardening or just want to try growing something new.

The [California Garden Web](http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/General/) is a University of California site dedicated to sustainable gardening in the many unique climates of California. Visit the site at <http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/General/>.

For gardening with native plants, go to <https://calscape.org/>. CalScape has a planting guide that allow you to search for plants that do well in your climate, and in the many different microclimates that may occur in your yard.

For parents with children at home, the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom has activities, games and lesson plans for children related to pollinators, gardening, agriculture, fruits and vegetables at <https://learnaboutag.org/>.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.