



Nourish

ISSUE 99

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., Food and Nutrition Specialist



cjp_istockphoto.com

Gardening can have positive health benefits throughout life. Some researchers have found that living near a garden or gardening as a child increases the likelihood that you will show an interest in gardening as you grow older. Consider fostering a love of gardening with your children, grandchildren or youth in your community.

Gardening Has Health Benefits

- **Decreased risk for diabetes:** Physical activity accumulates during gardening and other yard work. Physical activities, as well as balanced nutrition, are keys to managing diabetes.
- **Decreased risk for osteoporosis:** As we walk and lift, we put weight on our bones, which strengthens them and helps prevent osteoporosis, the bone-thinning disease.
- **Improved nutrition:** Participating in gardening, whether in a community setting or at home, increases the number of vegetables and fruits people eat. In a Michigan State University study, gardeners were 3.5 times more likely to eat fruits and vegetables five times a day.
- **Reduced stress:** Gardening can have a calming effect as you interact with nature and your fellow gardeners.

What if you have no room to garden?

Growing herbs and many types of vegetables can occur in containers on a patio or front step. Try intermingling vegetables with flowers. Here are some tips for container gardening.

- Be sure your container has drainage holes so extra water doesn't pool at the bottom and damage the roots. Tomatoes, peppers or eggplants usually require a 5-gallon container. Smaller pots work well for green onions, lettuce and herbs.
- Add potting mix, not plain soil from your yard. Your soil needs to drain well.
- Choose seeds or plants. You can start your own seedlings in egg cartons or even an old cake pan. Fill the container with potting soil, add seeds and cover with about a half-inch of soil. Cover with a clear plastic bag, place in a warm, sunny area and water regularly. When the seedlings have four or more leaves, they are ready to be transferred to the final pot.
- Find a sunny spot for your container. If your plants aren't doing well in the spot you chose, move the container to a better place.
- Water regularly and fertilize according to the directions on the container. Container gardens need to be watered more often than regular gardens, ideally at least once every morning.
- Add enough water on top of the soil so it begins to leak out the bottom.
- Be sure to pull weeds regularly. Weeds compete for space, water, nutrients and sunlight.

NDSU

EXTENSION

Get this newsletter in your email **every** month. Subscribe at
www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

Question

My parents have always loved to garden, but now they have some mobility issues and arthritis. What can I do to help?

Gardening is an excellent form of exercise, but it can be challenging if you have health issues that restrict your movement. Fortunately, many tools are available to help.

- Joint-friendly tools have easy-to-grip handles and/or long handles. Tools with handle extensions are another option.
- Kneeling pads can reduce stress on your knees.
- Scooter-like benches allow you to sit while weeding and can greatly reduce the amount of bending and stooping.
- Raised beds allow you to stand or sit on a stool next to the gardening box instead of bending.

Work with an occupational therapist for detailed recommendations. Be sure to take breaks to relax, drink plenty of water to hydrate and wear sunscreen.

For more information, view the Field to Fork webinar: [Gardening with Arthritis and Pain](#) by Esther McGinnis, NDSU Extension horticulture specialist, available on the Field to Fork website (www.ag.ndsu.edu/fieldtofork).



Halfpoint_istockphoto

Here's a tasty and colorful recipe featuring several vegetables.



Photo_Concepts_istockphoto

One-skillet Meal: Fiesta Chicken and Vegetables

- 2 teaspoons chili powder (or smoked paprika)
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (1 pound total)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans or black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup corn (frozen)
- ¾ cup bell pepper, diced (red, green, yellow)
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1 cup ready-to-eat salsa (mild or medium)
- Chopped cilantro (for garnish), if desired

Combine the spices, then rub over both sides of the chicken. In a large nonstick skillet, heat oil, then cook chicken over medium heat for 5 to 6 minutes on each side or until reaching an internal temperature of 165 F. Remove and keep warm. Add the beans, corn, bell peppers, onion and salsa to the skillet and bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes or until heated thoroughly. Transfer to a serving dish, and place chicken on top of the vegetable mixture. Garnish with chopped cilantro if desired. Serve with cooked rice or tortillas.

Makes four servings. Each serving has 320 calories, 7 grams (g) fat, 33 g protein, 30 g carbohydrate, 8 g fiber and 370 milligrams of sodium.