How Gardening Saved My Mental Health During the Pandemic

Have you ever felt overwhelmed, anxious, or stressed out? Chances are, you have. With the COVID-19 pandemic, these feelings have become more common than ever before. Many people have been struggling to cope with the sudden changes to their lives, and the isolation and uncertainty that have come along with it. However, there is a simple solution that has been proven to help: gardening.

The Benefits of Gardening for Mental Health

Gardening has been shown to have a wide range of benefits for mental health, including:

- Stress relief: Spending time outside in nature, getting your hands dirty, and focusing on the task at hand can help reduce stress and anxiety.
- Mood enhancement: Gardening can increase feelings of happiness and satisfaction, and even reduce symptoms of depression.
- Connection with nature: Being in nature has been shown to have a calming effect on the mind and body.
- Exercise: Gardening can be a great form of physical activity, which has been linked to improved mental health.
- Mindfulness: Gardening requires focus and attention to detail, which can help improve mindfulness and reduce rumination.

My Personal Experience with Gardening During the Pandemic

When the pandemic hit, I found myself feeling overwhelmed and anxious. I was worried about my health, my job, and my loved ones. I felt like I had no control over the situation, and it was taking a toll on my mental health. That's when I decided to start a garden.

At first, I had no idea what I was doing. I had never gardened before, and I didn't even have a green thumb. But I decided to give it a try anyway. I started small, with a few potted plants on my balcony. I researched online and joined online gardening communities to learn more.

As I got more involved in gardening, I started to notice a change in my mood. I felt more relaxed and less anxious. I looked forward to spending time outside in the fresh air, taking care of my plants. And when I saw them grow and thrive, it gave me a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Over time, my garden grew, and so did my love for gardening. I started growing vegetables and herbs, and even built a raised garden bed. And as I continued to garden, I felt more and more connected to nature and to myself. Gardening became a form of therapy for me, helping me to cope with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic.

The Science Behind Gardening and Mental Health

There is a growing body of research that supports the idea that gardening can have a positive impact on mental health. For example:

- A study published in the Journal of Health Psychology found that gardening can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improve mood.
- Another study, published in the International Journal of Environmental Health Research, found that gardening can increase feelings of relaxation and reduce stress.
- A review of 22 studies on gardening and mental health, published in the Journal of Public Health, found that gardening can improve mood, reduce stress and anxiety, and even improve symptoms of dementia.

How to Get Started with Gardening

If you're interested in trying gardening as a way to improve your mental health, here are a few tips to get started:

- Start small: You don't need a big yard or a lot of experience to start gardening. You can begin with a few potted plants or a small raised bed.
- Choose the right plants: Consider what types of plants will work best for your space and your level of experience. Herbs, vegetables, and succulents are great options for beginners.
- Research and learn: There are plenty of online resources and gardening communities that can help you learn the basics of gardening
- Make time for gardening: Set aside a regular time to work in your garden, even if it's just a few minutes a day. Consistency is key to seeing results.
- Embrace the process: Gardening is a learning process, and not everything will go perfectly. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and learn from them.

Conclusion

Gardening has been a lifesaver for many people during the pandemic, myself included. It's a simple and accessible way to improve mental health and connect with nature. Whether you have a green thumb or not, I encourage you to give gardening a try. You may be surprised at how much it can benefit your mental health and overall well-being.