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GARDEN GROW-HOW

A well designed garden is good for you, says **Katrina Kieffer-Wells** from Leigh-on-Sea-based Earth Designs

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNA OMIOTEK-TOTT PHOTOGRAPHY

Since lockdown we've come to appreciate green spaces more than ever. But did you know that if your garden isn't somewhere you want to be, you are missing out on multiple health benefits? The physical and mental health rewards of gardens and green space are well documented. And with a little imagination and investment, you too could be enjoying the happiness and well-being a well designed garden can bring. Here's how to make it the happy place you deserve.

Make your garden your happy place

Studies show that those who garden have higher well-being and lower stress levels. So don't let your green space languish in an unused and unhappy state. Even if you don't have green fingers you can still reap the benefits. Having a welcoming outdoor space is still good for your health.

And... relax

With the right sounds, smells and design elements your outdoor space can be a place to escape the pressures of modern life. Introduce sensory elements to help you switch off and unwind. Like repeating patterns and spirals which are pleasing and calming. Or tall grasses that swish in the breeze and sweet smelling plants like jasmine and lavender. Use screens or archways to designate 'quiet' and



Create your own tropical retreat with lush green tree ferns and banana palms

'busy' spaces. Have a quiet spot to be alone. And if you have space, get a water feature, even if it's a simple pouring spout, or pool.

Get physical in the garden

If you like getting your hands dirty, gardening is fabulous exercise. Studies show that 30 minutes of gardening is comparable to the same of yoga or badminton.

If gardening isn't your thing, why not take your exercise outside? Create your own tropical retreat with lush green tree ferns and banana palms. And practice your yoga under a pergola covered in climbing plants. Bliss.

Eat, love, garden

Gardens are an extension of your home. They are social spaces to enjoy as a family or with friends. Make yours a place where you cook and eat meals together, or sit round the firepit during long summer evenings.

Invest in good seating, soft furnishings and lighting to make it welcoming. And devote a space to eating together, even if it's a small table for two.

Award-winning Earth Designs are members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Association of Professional Landscapers.

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