

# Making gardening accessible for people of all abilities

'I thought I couldn't garden again after my injury... Now I know how to set up my own accessible garden.'



## Why garden?

Humans have always had an intimate relationship with the plants around them ... for food, shelter and beauty.

Gardening is a great activity — it helps you to keep fit.

It can help you to (re)learn skills after injury or illness.

Gardening can improve your happiness quota.

Growing your own fruit and veg means it is fresher and tastier — which is better for you.

You can create a calming, tranquil, peaceful space to relax in.

Gardening with others grows our social connections.

Most homes have a garden and according to the Australia Institute grow their own food. This brochure gives ideas on how to continue or start up a garden for people of all abilities.



## Setting up a garden

What type of garden do you want?

If you are just starting out — start off small with some potted plants then keep adding more.

If you have the room outside, add a raised bed (box) or a vertical garden.

Remember to leave enough room to be able to move around more freely. Wheelchairs usually needs about 800 mm. Use a non-slip surface.

Work out what height suits you best. A typical height for a raised bed is between 500 to 1200 mm high. Consider getting some help to make something purpose built for your needs. See the links below.

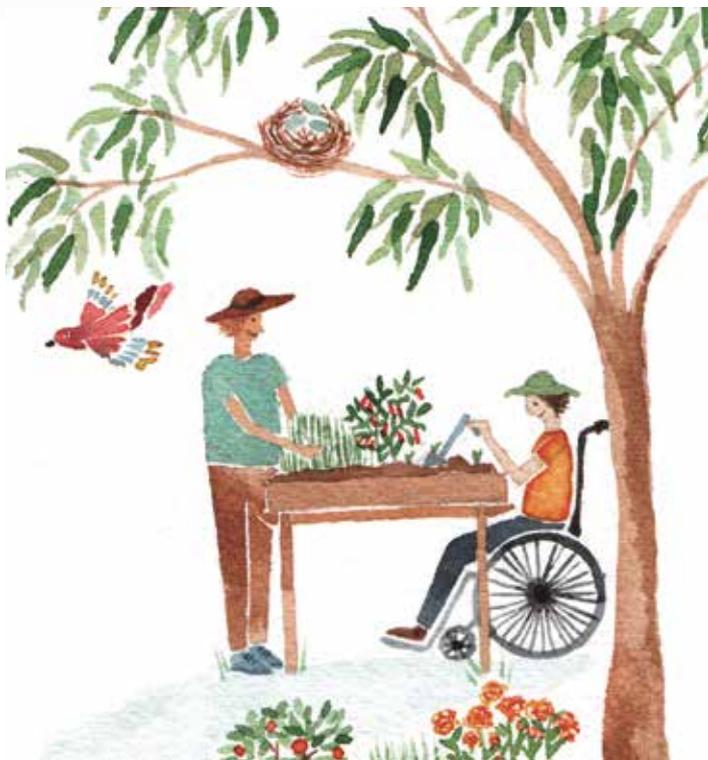
Durable materials like galvanised steel and hardwood timbers are best to withstand weather. When you buy new soil make sure it meets the Australian Standards (AS 4419 – 2002). If it is old soil consider getting it tested for contaminants.

If you only have a small courtyard or balcony try hanging baskets and consider putting your pots on castors so you can move them around to catch the sun at different times of the year.

You will also need to work out the best way to water your garden. It may be a light weight watering can or simple reticulation. Why not install a rainwater tank if you have the space.

Over time you will learn what plants will grow best in your space — learn from your losses about what to do and when.

Have a go — why not spread some seeds around and see what happens.



## Making it a little easier

You will need tools to help plant and maintain your garden. Light weight tools are best. Look at how easy they are to grip. There are a range of attachments you can buy that can extend the length of tools. You can also ask an occupational therapist to help adapt or make some tools to meet your particular needs.

The best way to store your tools is to clean them after using them and keep them somewhere dry and easy for you to get to.



'I love gardening. These are all good ideas on how I can keep gardening.'

## Types of plants

There are so many choices ... food to eat ... flowers to look at and smell ... low maintenance, ... sun / shade loving, ... indoor / outdoor plants.

If you are setting up an outdoor garden consider a nature garden to attract frogs and help the local animals.



## Recycling waste

One way to deal with your garden and kitchen waste is a compost bin.

Remember 'ADAM' — Aliveness, Diversity, Aeration and Moisture.

- ✓ fruit and vegetables
- ✗ meat and weeds

Alternate between green and brown layers. Keep it as wet as a wrung out sponge.



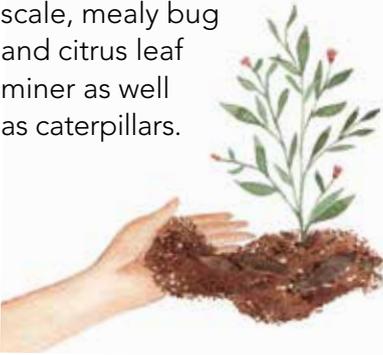
Or you could try a worm tower which sits directly into your raised garden bed. It's simple, get someone to drill some holes into PVC pipe that is at least 150 mm wide and put a lid on it.

## Pest Control

Go natural when dealing with fertilisers, bugs and diseases. Three simple options are:

Salt and vinegar for killing weeds

White oil spray controls aphids, scale, mealy bug and citrus leaf miner as well as caterpillars.



Coffee grounds to keep snails and slugs away.



White oil recipe: Put two cups of sunflower oil and half a cup of washing up liquid into a jar and shake. Label it and store this in a cool, dry place. It lasts about three months. To use add two dessert spoons to a litre of water.

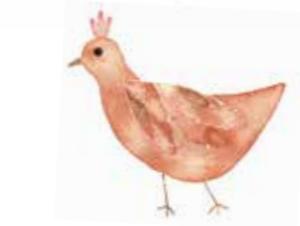
## More ideas?

Join a community garden. You can learn a lot from what others are doing.

Mix some clay, soil, seeds and compost with some water. Roll them into a ball. When they are dry you can spread your seed balls around. Seed balls are a great way to add colour to any unused, unloved public spaces near you.



Insects and birds are important pollinators. An insect hotel provides a space where they can live.



Add some art to your garden — shapes of animals is just one idea.



## Useful resources

**Community Gardens** | find out if you have a garden near you at [www.communitygarden.org.au](http://www.communitygarden.org.au)

**Your local library** will have heaps of inspirational gardening books.

## Some great online websites to look at are:

**Gardening Australia** | general gardening | [www.abc.net.au/gardening](http://www.abc.net.au/gardening)

**Thrive** | accessible gardening options | [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)

**Cultivate NSW** | accessible gardening options | [www.cultivatensw.org.au](http://www.cultivatensw.org.au)

**Your local Men's Shed** | your local men's shed can also be a great help if you need to make a bench or some equipment tailored to your needs [www.mensshed.org.au](http://www.mensshed.org.au)

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