

Forget can't - think can!

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Reece Cattermole
on life in the ring

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this year

SMASHING IT

Gordon Reid on his journey to Wimbledon

Green Fingers

Gardening can be a relaxing and simple way to keep active. While it might not seem like exercise, gardening is a form of aerobic exercise and is accessible to everyone

Spending an afternoon in the garden is a lovely way to relax, but you may be surprised to know that it's good for your health. Time outside means increasing your vitamin D intake, which helps with bone strength, and has even been found to help combat dementia. Gardens provide a safe and open environment for people with dementia, where memory can be stimulated and attention span improved by remembering the names of different plants. Garden designer and wheelchair user, Mark Lane says: "Gardening brings joy, physical, mental and spiritual well-being."

Building muscle can be one of the greatest benefits of gardening. It improves strength and your range of movement without the need for difficult exercise or heavy equipment. "It's improved my mental awareness and I have better cognitive recall, stronger muscles in my arms and hands, improved finger dexterity and less stress," he says.

GETTING STARTED

Before you head in to the garden, it's important to be prepared. Make sure you do your research first and decide on a project that suits your abilities as well as the time of year. "Don't think twice about it, but also be realistic. Know what you can do and work with it," suggests Mark.

Limited mobility doesn't have to mean limited gardening. "Sometimes it means thinking outside the box to get something done," he says. "Find a length of pipe, place the pipe over a hole, drop down the seed and hey presto, you have planted

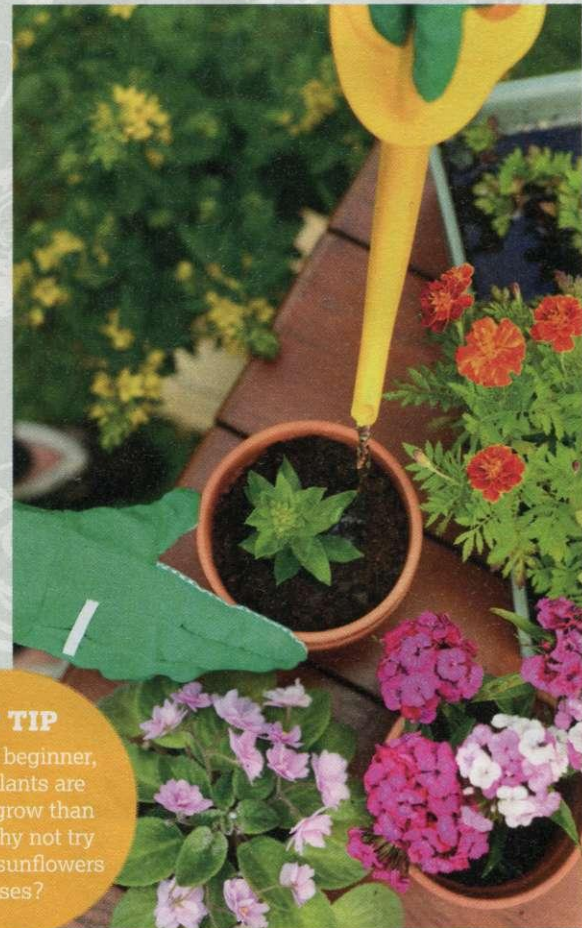
a bulb or sown a seed – simple!" There are countless tools available to make gardening easy and accessible, including raised flower beds to easy-grip tools. Remember to gather the tools you need and keep them in a basket or garden cart.

FINDING SPACE

You don't need a large garden to get started. "House plants are very fashionable at the moment: it's still gardening," says Mark. "If you have a window box or a pot, think about cut and come again lettuces, herbaceous perennials or bedding plants."

BE SOCIAL

Whether it's planting, pruning or landscaping, gardening doesn't need to be a solo activity. "Gardening is also a great social activity and can help with isolation," says Mark. Gather your family and friends or join a gardening club in your local area. Becoming part of a gardening club or an allotment group is a great way to meet new people, and swap garden tips and tricks with others, all while growing your own fruit and veg.



TOP TIP

If you're a beginner, certain plants are easier to grow than others. Why not try tomatoes, sunflowers or roses?

EQUIPMENT



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£28.51,
www.gardena.com

→ **EASI-GRIP ADD-ON HANDLES (PACK OF 2)**
£17.95,
www.peta-uk.com



↑ **GARDENA COMBISYSTEM COMFORT FLOWER RAKE**
£7.49,
www.gardena.com



SET OF 4 EASI-GRIP GARDEN TOOLS WITH ARM SUPPORT CUFF
£49.95, www.peta-uk.com

○ FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about the benefits of gardening and gardening clubs in your area, visit one of these useful links.

Accessible Gardens
www.accessiblegardens.org.uk

Carry on Gardening
www.carryongardening.org.uk

Gardening for Disabled Trust
www.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk