5 Tips for Getting the Most Out of Gardening With COPD

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

Gardening With COPD

Gardening for many is one of those great pleasures in life. You can see your creations come to life and watch them prosper over many years, a little like having a family.

Unfortunately for many COPD patients, the joy of gardening is replaced by the fear of being stranded out in the garden and exacerbated COPD symptoms.

When you're diagnosed with COPD, life can become complicated. We have to make compromises in how we live our lives and sometimes we are forced to sacrifice things we love to do.

In this article, I will discuss the gardening tools you'll need and ways to avoid exacerbating your symptoms while gardening.

What Do I Need to Get Started With Gardening?

First, get your shopping list ready, so you can get what you need to start gardening:

- **Lightweight tools.** These will require you to use less energy when using them so you can work longer. Get a rake and a hoe with extendable handles.
- **Dust masks.** If you mow your grass, you need to have one of these on to keep particles from entering your lungs.
- **Riding mower.** If you can afford it and you have a large yard, consider getting a riding mower to make mowing your lawn easier.
- **Small stool or bench.** You will use up less energy if you sit on a short stool or bench than you would be bending down and pulling weeds or other chores.

You should also begin by setting your gardening area up to make the activity easier. Relocate garden tools and garden hose near your garden, so you don't need to drag anything across your yard.

5 Tips for Gardening With COPD During the Spring or Summer

The spring or the summer are the perfect seasons to begin your gardening, so I'll give you my tips for keeping you in the garden without the stress.

Sharing the Load

Asking for help in the garden is one way to keep an active involvement and still enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Gardening is one of those hobbies my wife and I really enjoy. The reward of spending time in the garden and

seeing the fruits of your work is very satisfying. I have always enjoyed mowing the grass and took pride in having immaculate lawns.

When COPD hit me, lawn mowing became a thing of the past. The smell of cut grass is enough to bring on a bout of breathlessness which could then trigger days of exacerbated symptoms.

Fortunately, my children stepped in and kept the grass cut to my standards. I could still play my part in having nice lawns through weeding and fertilizing each week. As my children grew up and left home, I had to find another alternative.

I was fortunate enough to be able to hire a lawn mowing service to help out. While I still react to cut the grass now and then, I'll put on a filtered mask and push the mower around the yard.

Create Your Safe Environment

Creating a safe working environment is a must in the workplace, why not use the same strategy in the garden. Thinking about the likely pitfalls which keep you away from the garden may well lead to some solutions.

If mobility is a problem, look at ways you can safely move from the house to the yard and back. Installing safety rails can be helpful as well as using non-slip pathways. Have a family member or friend come over and clear away any obstacles which may impede you getting around the garden.

Garden work seats come in all shapes and sizes. Look at ones which you can lift or wheel around easily. The right tools of the trade can make life much easier and requires less effort to use. Be sure you know the tools you need and don't be afraid to seek a gardening experts advice.

Having a storage area nearby of your garden is useful and limits the amount you have to move around if mobility is an issue.

Have a Safety Net

By this I don't mean a net set up below a tree you have scaled to trim branches. A safety net is your peace of mind for when something unexpected happens. This could mean different things for different people. If you are planning to be in the garden for several hours, then you'll need to be prepared.

Firstly, make sure you let someone know you'll be doing some gardening and how long you'll expect to be. Prepare a kit to take out with you. Include essentials such as:

- The medication you may need.
- A phone in case something goes wrong.
- Water to keep you hydrated.
- A hat and sunscreen, so you don't become sunburnt.
- A first aid kit can be useful for splinters and cuts.

You may think this sounds like overkill, but if it means you can have a worry-free time in the garden, then it's worth it.

Pick Your Time

If you live in a hot climate as I do, then timing is very important when working in the garden. Mornings and late afternoons provide a far better experience than being trapped in the midday sun.

Likewise, if you live in a cold climate, the warm sun on your back is a far more pleasurable experience than shivering the hours away.

Keep an eye on the weather forecast. There is no use going to all this preparation if inclement weather is closing in.

How you are feeling is also an important factor to whether you are planning on spending time in the garden. If you are unwell, then the last thing your body will want is to be under duress.

Sometimes being able to enjoy the tranquillity of your garden when feeling unwell is a better option than to be maintaining it.

Never Let Your COPD Define You

This is the mantra I live my life by. It should be yours as well.

One of the struggles we face as COPD patients are the limitations our disease tries to place on us. It's hard sometimes not to give in but giving in means a poorer quality of life.

Whether it's gardening or any other past time you enjoy it's important to try and find a solution. Sometimes it can be obvious, other times we may have to look a little harder. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Family, friends or the *NewLifeOutlook* community are all avenues of support and help.

These are a few useful tips I have tried, some of which I have picked up from other patients. If you have your own strategies which work why not share them in the comments sections, you may help someone stay in their garden.