

Gardens for all

Helping everyone enjoy the great outdoors

For some disabled people, getting around a garden or enjoying it to the full can be at best a challenge and at worst, an impossibility. So let's look at ways of enabling people of all abilities to appreciate and experience the wonders of nature.

Does your property or establishment allow for wheelchair access around the grounds? Say you have an award-winning garden - can someone with impaired sight still get the benefits of spending time in it? Try to appeal to all the senses – with contrasting colours, scented plants and interesting textures. Think about the material used for pathways (gravel can be a no-no for some walking aids and wheelchairs) and perhaps create raised beds to allow wheelchair users to experience plants (and even gardening) close up.

Creating a sensory garden or trail

This is one of the best ways to enable everyone to enjoy your garden or grounds, even if they have a visual impairment. Children of all abilities also love sensory gardens. Aim to also factor in physical accessibility by having wide, curved (corners can be difficult) ideally paved pathways and some raised beds or borders too.

- Sensory gardens or trails provide a multi-sensory experience with abundant colours, smells, sounds and textures, all designed to stimulate the senses.
- Different areas of the garden or trail may be themed on stimulating different senses.
- Wildlife can be encouraged by planting insect and bird friendly plants such as Buddleia or through wildlife refuges such as bird boxes and insect hotels.
- Textures: use plants with unusual textures and position them close to paths so they are within reach. Plants might include fennel (feathery), comfrey leaves (rough), ivy (smooth), honesty seeds (papery), goose grass (sticky) and moss (spongy).

- Smells: plant herbs such as thyme, wild garlic, mint, sage or highly scented flowers including lavender and honeysuckle.
- Sounds: use rustling plants such as bamboo, install running water features or fountains or wind chimes using different materials.
- Colours: select bright and vibrantly-hued plants and flowers including marigolds, chrysanthemums, dahlias and geraniums.

Around one fifth of the UK population have a degree of disability.

Spending time in inspiring outdoor spaces is known to improve well being*

There are more gardens open to the public in the UK than in any other country in the world.

SOURCE <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1359105310365577>

Useful websites

<http://www.accessiblegardens.org.uk/>

Tourism and the Disability Discrimination Act:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/tourism-and-the-disability-discrimination-act>

The Sensory Trust (fact sheets on accessibility): www.sensorytrust.org.uk

Tourism for All (UK charity campaigning for access for all) www.tourismforall.org.uk

Euan's Guide www.euansguide.com



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