



Mindful Gardens

DESIGNED FOR LIVING. INSPIRED BY NATURE

WELLNESS GARDEN GUIDE

A practical guide to creating an outdoor space designed for calm, connection, movement and everyday wellbeing.



PAUSE • BREATHE • MOVE • CONNECT • REST

A wellness garden is designed around how a space makes people feel and how they can use it. It can provide somewhere to pause after a busy day, enjoy nature, practise mindfulness, exercise, socialise, or simply sit and do nothing.

Wellness does not require a large garden. Thoughtful layout, planting, privacy, natural materials, comfortable seating and a sense of refuge can transform even a modest outdoor space.

What is a wellness garden?

Designing a garden around wellbeing, experience and everyday life.

A wellness garden is an outdoor environment intentionally designed to support positive everyday experiences.

Rather than focusing only on appearance, it considers movement, relaxation, privacy, nature connection, social interaction and opportunities to step away from screens and daily demands.

There is no single formula. A wellness garden may be a quiet domestic retreat, a family garden with space to play and unwind, a workplace courtyard, or a larger garden serving a community or care setting.

Potential benefits of a well-designed wellness garden

BENEFIT	WHAT IT CAN DO
Nature connection	Opportunities to notice plants, wildlife, weather and seasonal change.
Relaxation	Quiet seating, sheltered corners, soft planting and calming views.
Mindfulness	Places to pause, breathe, observe and focus attention on the present moment.
Movement	Paths, lawns, stepping routes and spaces for gentle exercise, yoga or stretching.
Privacy & refuge	Screening and enclosure can create a sense of retreat from surrounding activity.
Routine & purpose	Gardening, growing food and seasonal tasks can create meaningful outdoor routines.

TOP TIP: The aim is not to promise a medical outcome. Instead, wellness garden design creates opportunities for restorative, enjoyable and meaningful experiences outdoors.

THE INGREDIENTS OF A WELLNESS GARDEN

Combine different experiences to create a garden with a natural rhythm.

A PLACE TO PAUSE

A bench, chair, daybed or sheltered nook positioned to enjoy planting, sunlight, birds or a favourite view.

A SENSE OF ENCLOSURE

Trees, shrubs, hedges, climbers, screens or pergolas can make part of a garden feel protected and private.

NATURAL MOVEMENT

Grasses, leaves, flowers and planting that moves gently in the breeze can make the garden feel alive.

WATER

A small pond, rill, bowl or fountain can introduce reflection, movement and gentle sound.

FEATURES

Choose features that are appropriate to the users and maintenance available.

A MINDFUL FOCAL POINT

A tree, sculpture, stone, planting composition or framed view can give the eye somewhere to rest.

SPACE TO MOVE

A simple looped path or open area can encourage walking, stretching, yoga or playful activity.

COMFORT

Consider shade, shelter, seating, lighting and surfaces so the garden remains usable beyond perfect weather.

SEASONAL CHANGE

Use spring bulbs, summer flowers, autumn foliage, berries, grasses and winter structure to keep the garden evolving.

TOP TIP: A useful principle: create a sequence rather than filling every corner. Let some areas be open and simple, while others feel enclosed, immersive or full of planting



PLANTS FOR A WELLNESS GARDEN

Choose plants that create atmosphere, structure and seasonal interest.

Plant selection should begin with the conditions of the garden: light, soil, drainage, exposure and mature size. Once the framework is right, choose plants for qualities such as softness, movement, fragrance, wildlife value, colour and year-round structure.

PLANT	QUALITY	WHY CONSIDER IT
LAVANDULA (LAVENDER)	Fragrance • Colour	Aromatic foliage and flowers; suits sunny, well-drained areas
NEPETA (CATMINT)	Softness • Colour • Wildlife	Relaxed form, aromatic foliage and a long flowering period.
STIPA / ORNAMENTAL GRASSES	Movement • Texture	Fine foliage and seedheads create gentle movement and seasonal structure.
ROSE, FRAGRANT VARIETIES	Fragrance • Beauty	Can create a strong focal planting moment around seating or entrances.
AMELANCHIER	Seasonal change	Spring blossom, summer berries and attractive autumn colour.
BETULA (BIRCH)	Structure • Light	Decorative bark and an open canopy can create a light, calming framework.
THYMUS / THYME	Fragrance • Taste	Useful around paths, in sunny positions and edible planting areas.
SALVIA	Colour • Wildlife	Flowers add seasonal colour and support pollinators.
FERNS	Texture • Calm	Excellent for shady areas and create lush, soft foliage.
HERBS & EDIBLE PLANTS	Taste • Purpose	Encourage interaction through growing, harvesting and cooking.

TOP TIP: Repeat a small number of key plants rather than using one of everything. Repetition creates visual calm and makes a garden feel intentional.

HOW TO DESIGN A WELLNESS GARDEN

Use layout to influence pace, privacy and how people experience the space.

DEFINE THE FEELING

Before choosing plants, describe the atmosphere you want: calm, restorative, sociable, energising, private, playful or a combination.

IDENTIFY THE BEST VIEW

Position seating so the eye looks towards something worth enjoying - a tree, planting, water, sunset, wildlife area or open view.

CREATE A DESTINATION

Give the garden a reason to be entered. A bench, pergola, fire bowl, dining area, yoga deck or secluded seat can draw people outside.

CONTROL MOVEMENT

Curving paths can slow the journey and reveal planting gradually. Direct routes work well where accessibility and convenience are priorities.

BUILD PRIVACY CAREFULLY

Screen unwanted views without making every area completely enclosed. Layered planting often feels softer than a solid fence.

BALANCE OPEN AND ENCLOSED

A combination of lawn/open space and sheltered planting creates variety and choice.

DESIGN FOR THE SENSES

Use fragrance near paths, texture where people can reach it, sound near seating and movement where it can be seen.

ADD PRACTICAL COMFORT

Plan shade, shelter, lighting, storage, water access and easy maintenance alongside the aesthetic design.

TOP TIP: Think of the garden as a series of experiences:
Arrival ➡ Transition ➡ Discovery ➡ Pause ➡ Connection ➡ Return.



CREATE SPACES FOR WELLBEING ACTIVITIES

Different activities need different types of space.

ACTIVITY	DESIGN RESPONSE
Mindfulness / meditation	A quiet seat or small platform away from the busiest route, with a simple view and minimal visual clutter.
Yoga / Stretching	A level, stable surface with enough room to move, ideally with a pleasant outlook and some privacy.
Walking	A looped route can make a garden feel larger and create a gentle rhythm of movement.
Gardening	Raised beds, containers or accessible borders can bring planting within easy reach.
Reading / solitude	Create a sheltered seat with screening, shade and a strong sense of enclosure.
Dining / socialising	Position tables close to the house or kitchen, with planting used to soften boundaries.
Family time	Combine open space with planting and seating so different activities can happen simultaneously.
Wildlife watching	Use nectar-rich planting, seedheads, berries, shelter and water where appropriate.

A wellness garden does not have to be silent or minimalist. For some people, wellbeing comes from cooking outdoors, gardening with family, watching children play, entertaining friends or tending plants. Design around the people who will actually use the space.

TOP TIP: The strongest gardens offer choice: somewhere active, somewhere social and somewhere quiet.

MAKING WELLNESS GARDENS PRACTICAL & INCLUSIVE

Wellbeing depends on a garden being comfortable and usable.

ACCESSIBILITY

Provide firm, stable routes and consider level changes, path widths, thresholds and access to key features.

SEATING

Offer more than one seating position. Consider backs, arms, seat heights, shade and views.

WEATHER

Ireland's changeable weather makes shelter, drainage and wind protection especially valuable.

LIGHTING

Use warm, subtle lighting to extend use into the evening while avoiding glare and unnecessary light spill.

MAINTENANCE

Choose plants and materials that match the time and resources available. A low-maintenance garden can still feel rich and restorative.

SAFETY

Review trip hazards, slippery surfaces, water features, plant toxicity, sharp edges and visibility for the intended users.

PRIVACY

Use layered planting, trellis, hedges and trees to create privacy without making the garden feel closed in.

WILDLIFE

Plant for pollinators and provide habitat where practical. Wildlife activity can add movement and seasonal interest.

DESIGN FOR REAL LIFE

A wellness garden should work on ordinary days—not only when everything is in flower. Include evergreen structure, robust surfaces, comfortable seating and planting that remains interesting through autumn and winter.

KEEP THE MAINTENANCE REALISTIC

The right maintenance level is part of the design brief. Consider watering, pruning, mowing, leaf clearance, weeding and seasonal cutbacks before the garden is built.

DESIGN A GARDEN THAT FEELS GOOD TO BE IN

A wellness garden is an invitation to spend time outdoors - to pause, breathe, move, connect and enjoy the changing seasons.

HOW MINDFUL GARDENS CAN HELP

- Bespoke sensory and wellness garden design for domestic and commercial spaces
- In-person and online garden consultations
- Planting plans and practical horticultural advice
- Workshops and nature-based experiences for schools, community groups and businesses
- Garden maintenance and ongoing horticultural support

Whether you want a peaceful corner, a family garden filled with discovery, or a larger shared space designed around wellbeing, the starting point is understanding how you want people to experience the garden.

3D DESIGNS, PLANTING PLANS AND WORKSHOPS



WORKSHOPS SUCH AS:

- How to design your garden
- Gardening on a budget
- Create a Wellness Garden
- Create a Sensory Garden
- Growing from seed
- Where does your food come from?
- Make a miniature Sensory Garden
- Plant a veg box
- Propagation, cuttings & grafting
- Multiply your plants & many more.



Mindful  Gardens
SENSORY & WELLNESS DESIGN

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