

Get Into the Garden

Spring and summer brings the perfect time to share some garden activities that stimulate the senses, encourage exercise and provide a sense of purpose. If you don't have a yard, a patio with planters or a balcony with window boxes can substitute. Enlist help from the person with dementia to get those annuals planted.

Break each activity into doable segments. A person with dementia might enjoy digging the holes for the annuals. Modeling the action will help get him or her started in the activity. Talk about favourite plant species and colours.

After the hole is dug, have the person place the flower in it, then pat down the dirt. Have him or her hold the watering can steady while you tip it. Once you have a few plants in, take a step back and admire your mutual handiwork. Take time to stop and smell the flowers! The distinctive smell of a tomato plant can evoke vivid memories. Did you help in your parents' homestead garden? What did you grow?

Once the plants are established, there's lots of maintenance to do – you can deadhead the spent blossoms, pull out the weeds that inevitably spring up and keep everything well watered.

The main thing is -- engage the person in an activity where you can both relax and enjoy a sense of accomplishing something together. And, in the case of a vegetable garden -- when harvest time comes, a whole new set of activities awaits!

