

Gardening Techniques for Visually Impaired

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Those with visual impairments can enjoy the benefits of gardening by making a few simple adjustments to their garden's layout and their gardening techniques:

Garden Layout:

- Layout the garden using as few curves as possible, using predominantly straight edges and right angles for better navigation.
- Use markers such as shrubs or trees, or a change in path color or texture to indicate changes in path direction.
- Place railings on all steps.
- Make single-side access flower beds and raised beds no more than 3 feet across to allow the gardener to reach all plants; two-sided accessible beds can be wider.
- Avoid plants that have thorns and don't allow plants to overhang into the pathway.
- Use sound markers such as wind chimes or moving water.

Plant Selection:

- Select plants that are not overpowering in their odors.
- Pick brightly colored plants for individuals with partial vision.
- Group particular colors together.

Seeding:

- Run a string with knots tied in it every few inches along your planting area, this allows the gardener to feel their way down the string and plant seeds at the knots.
- Use a damp finger to pick up tiny seeds and place them a few at a time on small pieces of tissue paper, place the paper in the garden and cover with dirt. The paper will quickly disintegrate, fertilizing the plants.
- Drill holes into a board at regular intervals and drop seeds into the ground through the board.

Tools:

- Purchase or paint your tools bright colors to make them easier to find.
- Use one-handed versions of tools whenever possible, freeing the other hand to feel the plant.
- Keep tools in a bag that you can carry with you as you move around the garden.
- Use one-handed carts to transport tools and attach a radio or other sound-making device to them to allow them to be easier located.

For additional information contact your local Outreach and Extension Service or the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1.800.995.8503.

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