

# Age-friendly gardens

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*Show me  
your garden  
and I shall  
tell you what  
you are.*

Alfred Austin







# Benefits of gardening

- ❖ Is an enjoyable form of exercise.
- ❖ Increases physical activity and maintains mobility and flexibility.
- ❖ Encourages use of all motor skills – walking, reaching and bending
- ❖ Improves endurance and strength.
- ❖ Helps prevent diseases like osteoporosis.
- ❖ Reduces stress levels and promotes relaxation.
- ❖ Provides stimulation and interest in nature and the outdoors.
- ❖ Improves wellbeing as a result of social interaction.
- ❖ Provides nutritious, home-grown produce.

Source:[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Gardening\\_for\\_seniors](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Gardening_for_seniors)



# Reality for many older gardeners

- ❖ Reminder of loss; *“My husband and I cherished the garden and it is disappointing that I cannot maintain it like it was when he was alive”*
- ❖ Source of stress
- ❖ Reason for premature residential care.



# Warrnambool experience

## Active ageing plan 2008-2013

- ❖ Environmental
- ❖ Social
- ❖ Economic
- ❖ 'Whole of Council' approach
- ❖ Age-friendly cities checklist.











# Active Service Model

Victorian Department of Health Restorative  
approach for HACCC services

– do ‘with’ not ‘for’.



# Aim for an age-friendly garden



Age-friendly garden group members, from left, project worker Karen Walsh, Joan McIntyre, Ruth Luxford, June Preece and Marnie McDowall.

**A** NEW reference group will hold a free forum on gardening this month.

The Warrnambool City Council Age Friendly Gardens Reference Group has been meeting fortnightly to discuss ways to assist older gardeners.

Project officer Karen Walsh said it was important older gardeners were able to enjoy and maintain their

gardens. One of the ideas the group has come up with is a demonstration site, where people could get an idea for an easy to maintain garden.

The group will also be hosting a free forum for gardening service providers on Wednesday, July 22 from 5.30pm to 6.30pm at the Archie Graham Community Centre.

The Warrnambool Age Friendly Gardens Reference Group has also

decided to contribute a monthly column to the *Warrnambool Extra*.

The group aims to provide information and ideas to assist older gardeners to be able to continue enjoying and maintaining their gardens.

If you have any ideas for future columns, contact Karen Walsh at Warrnambool City Council on 5559 4866.

## GARDENING COLUMN BY GROUP MEMBER CHRIS SATZKE

**T**HE leaves from that tree next door have blown into your front yard and lie sullen and slimy over your path.

Your once neat garden beds are home to oxalis.

The lawn's green again, but is escaping its boundaries and those pots all need attention.

It's enough to put you off the whole gardening thing.

Winter gardens have their own charm, but how do you keep your garden looking good when it's cold outside and you can't get around as well as you used to?

The experts reckon that gardening's good for the mind, body and soul.

Our gardens should make us feel good, not wear us down or trip us up.

Winter is the ideal time to take a good look at how safe your front and backyards are and organise any changes.

Let's look at getting around your garden.

**Are your paths wide and easy to navigate?**

Narrow, twisty paths may look

charming, but they're hard to negotiate.

A roughened hard surface, such as concrete, is easier to use with walkers and other mobility equipment.

**Are any paths slippery and treacherous?**

Some surfaces look good but become slippery in the wet.

Too much shade can also encourage moss to grow.

**Are steps wide, shallow and in good condition?**

Handrails are essential for steps. And ramps rather than stairs improve access.

**Are doorways, paths and steps clutter-free?**

Keep pots, garden ornaments and treasures away from where people walk.

**Are there any overhanging branches impeding access?**

That shrub you have to push aside to get to the letterbox needs to go! Safety is a big concern for older gardeners and that ounce of prevention can make a huge difference.

Stay safe!

REFLECTIONS

WHAT'S ON

Graham Centre on Wednesday, July 22.

The top course book will be held at

Thanks to the reference group:

Ruth,  
June,  
Dorothy,  
Joan,  
Frank,  
Marnie  
and Chris



# Strategies

- ❖ Information and resources – tools, techniques, safety.
- ❖ Demonstration sites- age friendly features
- ❖ Subsidized upgrades – the big jobs
- ❖ Criteria for choosing a service provider
- ❖ Lobby for waste disposal options.



# Individual focus – info & resources

## **Age-friendly gardening expo**

Approx. 70 people, 12 displays

## **Process evaluations (31 completed)**

## **Importance of the garden to respondents**

❖ **Very important: 27/31**

## **Biggest problems maintaining the garden:**

Weeding, can't dig now, time to do it all.





# Garden upgrades

320 clients 3 choices:

- ❖ Raised garden bed
- ❖ Backyard clean-up and pruning
- ❖ Weed mat and mulch.

127 replies within 1 week.



*“Absolutely, it’s  
easy. No stress  
on your back.*

*I’ve had a big  
reduction in pain  
and discomfort”*

Max







*"I wouldn't have been growing the vegies  
without it" Pat*

# Emotional health impact

*'It was making me sick not being able to garden.'*

*'No stress or worry about hurting myself now'*

*'Something to look forward to. Lots of pleasure. If I get beaten at bowls I can come home and forget about it'*

*'It makes me happy. Delighted to have it'*







*“It’s much easier to grow and harvest vegies.*

*Very few weeds.”*

Nelda





*“It’s very nice. Just to be able to pick a lettuce is marvelous”* Margaret



## ***So far we've grown:***

Silver beet, beans, carrots, tomatoes, tomatoes, parsley, silver beet, carrots, tomatoes, basil, lettuce, peas, bok choy, lettuce, basil, strawberries, baby beetroot, tomatoes, leeks, chives, rocket corn, silver beet, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, beans, beans, tomatoes, beetroot, carrots, lettuce. Lots of lettuces, spinach, leeks, chives, peas, peas, bok choy, lettuce, basil, strawberries, baby beetroot, tomatoes, leeks, chives, rocket corn, silver beet, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, beans, beans, tomatoes, beetroot, carrots, lettuce. tomatoes, cucumber, basil, coriander, silver beet, herbs, tomatoes, beetroot, capsicum.



# Social marketing









# Partnerships

- ❖ Warrnambool Community Garden to design and build demonstration raised beds.
  - ❖ A local landscaping company to install raised beds in people's gardens
  - ❖ A local school to involve yr 11 and 12 students in community programs, incl. raised garden beds installation and courtyard designs.
  - ❖ Local garden maintenance & design services on the quality 'Age-friendly Providers' list.
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# Broader change strategies

## **Age-friendly gardening TAFE course**

4 hour course for people working in garden design & maintenance, developed locally.

Safety, design and planting strategies to address the needs of older gardeners.

Currently 10 participants.

**Criteria for 'Age-friendly provider' status.**





# Transferability

## **Factors specific to Warrnambool:**

- ❖ The climatic conditions; we get rain here!
- ❖ Local demand for the HM service
- ❖ Large blocks, gardening culture
- ❖ Warrnambool's relative isolation and traditional cohesive community.



# Factors likely to be replicable in other areas

- ❖ The quality listing for private gardening services
- ❖ Installing raised garden beds.
- ❖ Community gardens as demonstration sites
- ❖ TAFE course will be adaptable across settings.









# Resources

- <http://www.gardenforever.com/>
- <http://www.carryongardening.org.uk/>
- <http://www.easycaregardening.org.au/>
- <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1642.html>
- <http://www.horticulturaltherapy.com.au>





# References

Judd, B et al. (2010) *Dwelling, land and neighbourhood use by older home owners*. AHURI Final Report No. 144. Melbourne: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, UNSW-UWS Research Centre.

