Grow an Allergy-Friendly Garden This Spring

CONTRA COSTA HEALTH

They say you reap what you sow—and when it comes to gardening with allergies, that old saying couldn't be truer. If you're one of the 40 to 60 million Americans with hay fever, pollen from the grasses, trees, and weeds in your neighborhood can aggravate symptoms. But planting certain seeds, shrubs, and saplings this spring can help you have fewer symptoms all season long.

Uproot these grasses and trees

Seasonal allergies occur when your body treats pollen in the air as an unwelcome invader. This overreaction can cause congestion, sneezing, a runny nose, a scratchy throat, and itchy, watery eyes.
Some greenery can make allergy symptoms worse than others. Aim to keep these irritating offenders off your property:

- Grasses: Johnson, rye, Timothy, Bermuda, orchard, sweet vernal, bluegrass, fescue
- Allergy-triggering trees: maple, oak, ash, birch, hickory, juniper, cedar, cottonwood

Hedge your bets with these habits

Gardening is good exercise, produces nutritious fruits and vegetables, and helps beautify your community. In short, it's worth the effort, even with allergies. To increase your comfort, follow these tips:

- **Check pollen counts in your area.** Skip gardening on days when they're high.
- **Take your allergy medicines before you head outside**. And if you have asthma, keep your quick-relief medicines on hand.
- **No matter what type of grass you have, keep it short.** If you can, ask someone else to mow.
- **Don't touch your eyes or face while you're working.** Try wearing a mask and gloves.
- **Wash your hands often and rinse your eyes when you come back inside.** Shower right away to help ease your symptoms.
- **Visit an allergist.** They can help you identify the plants that aggravate your symptoms. You might benefit from treatments such as allergy shots. **Now get growing!**

Raise these fruits and flowers instead

Having allergies doesn't mean you're stuck landscaping with gravel and concrete. These buds and blooms will beautify your yard with less chance of giving you the sniffles:
Flowers: lilac, daisy, geranium, dahlia, hibiscus, iris, roses, snapdragon, tulips
Low-allergen trees: cherry, crepe myrtle, redwood, apple, dogwood, pear, plum

Another option? If you're in a warm, dry climate, consider succulents, such as cactus plants.

Sources: The StayWell Company LLC. Adapted from https://healthed.cchealth.org/Search/88,p11068

Nutrition Resources

We want your feedback.
Take our quick survey!

Here in Contra Costa County

You can access the following services to help you manage your care. If you have questions about how to manage your allergies or to talk about screenings, make an appointment with one of our providers by calling **1-877-661-6230.**

Helpful resources on healthy eating, food assistance, and more

For more information, visit these websites or scan the QR codes below!

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Create healthy habits to help protect your child's development. To apply for food assistance in Contra Costa County, visit **cchealth.org/services-and-programs/support-for-families/wic**.

Cal-Fresh

Get healthy and nutritious foods for the family. For more information on food assistance, visit **cdss.ca.gov/food-nutrition/calfresh**.

My Plate

Create a plan to eat healthy. To learn more, visit **myplate.gov/myplate-plan**.

Fresh Approach

Get access to fresh foods and resources at farmers' markets near you. Visit **freshapproach.org** for available programs.

Contra Costa Health - Health Education

Get access to health tips, self-management tools, and more information on nutrition for you and your family! Visit **healthed.cchealth.org**.

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