Arthritis affects people in different ways and in varying severity. This chronic condition is the leading cause of disability and is associated with decreased quality of life and overall reduction in functional capacity. Physical activity has been shown to delay and reduce the risk of disability and distress associated with arthritis. Regular participation in daily leisure activities is beneficial in promoting the health of a person with arthritis. However, few studies have thoroughly explored the positive role gardening can have on arthritis; the majority of the literature indicates gardening as one type of physical activity and does little to support its health benefits.

The 2010 Gardening with Arthritis Project’s study design was a prospective, non-randomized cohort pilot project. Fifty-three individuals who had been diagnosed with arthritis participated in the 12 week study designed to evaluate new resources and test interventions designed to support people with arthritis. It was hypothesized that the intervention would allow participants to remain active gardeners by allowing them to garden longer and with less pain.

The group’s results showed a decrease in the level of pain, increased self-efficacy in their ability to manage pain, and a decrease in depression. The pilot project had limitations, including a small sample size, single group threats to validity of findings, and being almost exclusively a female sample. Mostly active, motivated persons were enrolled in the project, so replication may be limited as well. Future studies should be modified in order to incorporate an increase in sample size and revise the study design into two groups with a control group.