



# lazy days

Wind-dried laundry, cherries, berries, and bees ...

## CARING FOR FRESH FLOWERS!

Picking blooms from the garden is a summertime pleasure. Keep your flowers fresher for longer with **Sharon Mark's** easy commonsense tips!

Cut flowers in the morning, when it's cool and stems are full of stored moisture and nutrients.



Cut stems at an angle with a sharp knife or scissors to increase water uptake in the vase. Remove any leaves that will sit below the water line to prevent them from rotting. Change water daily to minimise bacterial growth and stagnant odours. Place a copper coin in the vase water; some say this works as a natural fungicide! Arrange flowers loosely in the vase so they can breathe. Add a teaspoon of white sugar to the vase water as a food source. Keep flowers out of direct sunlight to prevent premature wilting.

WIN!

A glorious summer bouquet from Wild Poppies worth \$89!  
[www.wildpoppies.co.nz](http://www.wildpoppies.co.nz)

Bring the garden into your home with our floral giveaway from Ponsonby flower and gift company Wild Poppies. It delivers nationally and its website sells a cornucopia of cakes, gift baskets, baby treats and ... flowers!

**To enter the Wild Poppies bouquet giveaway, see our entry form, page 10.**



PHOTOS: BOYER, MATYIA, CAROLE GOMEZ, BILL NOLL, ISTOCKPHOTO

*I Am Here!* is a special section of *Family Care* that focuses on personal wellbeing. How do you relax and re-energise? Share your ideas with other readers; our contact details are on page 6!

# backyard play ground



Prickly plants like roses and bougainvillea are unsuitable for curious Harvey, who has Cri du Chat Syndrome. His mum, **Jo Ellis**, has spent several years redeveloping their garden so it's safe for Harvey, and filled with plants to taste, touch, and smell!

My son Harvey and I moved back to New Zealand in 2007 and into our current home the following year.

My ex-husband was in hospitality and we lived in hotels and apartments overseas for many years, so it was quite a novelty to have a garden of our own.

Unfortunately, we inherited a very overgrown and neglected garden that was initially simply not suitable for us.

Harvey was two years old when we first moved into our home.

He has just turned five, something he likes to tell everybody!

Harvey has Cri du Chat Syndrome, which is a partial deletion of the 5th chromosome.

This has affected him intellectually and physically, but Harvey is able to crawl and pull himself to a standing position whilst holding onto something, and can walk with his walker if he is supported and supervised.

He uses a wheelchair to access the community.

Due to his disability, Harvey does a lot of exploring with his mouth, and likes to put everything in it!

This tendency posed dangers for Harvey in our garden, so it needed major changes.

The garden had been well planted originally, with lots of pavers and roses, but I had my own clear vision for this small space in the front of our unit and how I might make it safe for my son.

When I told family and friends of my plans to remove the sharp-edged pavers and thorny roses, I met with a bit of resistance!



They no doubt wondered why I wanted to remove well established and perfectly good plants and paved areas.

The first priority was to remove the prickly plants, so the bougainvillea and roses had to go, as well as the rhubarb plant with its poisonous leaves.

The pavers were given away at our garage sale. Crawling on them would have been painful for Harvey.

This is how we met Margie, who is a horticulturist, and a very generous and wonderful lady.

We have since become friends, and Margie has inspired and helped me so much.

She has installed our pavers in her garden, while providing us with ongoing support, ideas and plants for ours.

After removing the unwanted plants and pavers, we installed a new bark garden and laid grass.

These simple steps have enabled me to maintain a very tidy garden over the last three years, while providing plenty of space for Harvey to play.

There is room for his paddling pool in the summer, and to crawl around on the grass to his heart's content on sunny days.

The garden has evolved to match my

original vision, remaining tidy as I slowly add plants: herbs, vegetables, and plants with texture that are a pleasure for Harvey to touch.

Recently Harvey and I were walking through our neighbourhood, and I was overwhelmed by the aromas from somebody's wonderful garden.

This made me think about what other people could do to ensure their garden is safer for loved ones, or to provide a pleasing sensory experience for people who have vision problems or use a wheelchair.

I could just imagine a garden that had appealing areas to sit, that attracted birds, and also smelled wonderful.

Or, one that was a visual feast of colour and variety.

I am new to gardening, and would love ideas from other readers to make my garden enjoyable for my son and myself.

Already it has been such a wonderful learning experience for us both.

I'm sure this is true for many others! >

**Send your garden stories, feedback, and tips for Jo and Harvey to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442, or email [sara@carers.net.nz](mailto:sara@carers.net.nz)**



Jo's safe garden ideas

**If you need to redevelop your garden to make it safer or more friendly, here are some suggestions!**

Source budget friendly plants.

Can you get cuttings from neighbours or friends?

Go for a walk in your neighbourhood to see what plants thrive in the local soil and conditions.

Consider the amount of time you can spend in your garden if you are a carer, or if mobility is an issue. Try to create an appealing environment that requires little maintenance.

Consider what plants may be poisonous. My mum gifted Harvey a Swan plant to attract butterflies, but it is poisonous, so we have put it in her garden to enjoy when we visit. Learn about plant properties and which might be poisonous or irritating by checking out library books, or search online.

Plan an edible garden to enjoy through the year.

Creating a garden area for vegetables and herbs is a great family project. It can be therapeutic to nurture plants and see them thrive ... and you can eat them!

Plant extra flowers, veges and herbs, as these make welcome thank you gifts for neighbours and helpers.

Plant flowers in hanging baskets if, like Harvey, the person you support gets into everything!

Think of textured plants for those that like to touch.

Consider the perfume of a plant.

Drought resistant plants are a good option, or consider natives, which attract visits from birds.

Avoid plants with thorns or spikes.

Research natural ways to manage pests and weeds, especially if someone in the family has allergies or might eat plants that have been sprayed with chemicals.

Enlist help and advice from green-fingered friends and neighbours!

Have plants at a good height to reduce bending down, or consider a raised garden area.

*Make a sunflower bird feeder!*

We love Martha Stewart's suggestion about how to use the heads of large sunflowers to create a natural bird feeder to hang in the garden. You can watch the video about how to make these feeders [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com) (search for *sunflower bird feeder* to find the short video; there are many other bird feeder ideas at the site).



**You'll need two large sunflower heads (see our King's Seeds giveaway below) and a Phillips-head screwdriver, plus floral wire.**

- 1 Dry the sunflowers in a cool, well-ventilated place to prevent mould.
- 2 When the heads turn brown and the backs of the flowers turn yellow, you can make your feeder.
- 3 First, remove the heads of the sunflowers from their stalks, then use the screwdriver to make two small holes about an inch apart in the middle of each dried sunflower head (push the screwdriver through the soft underside of the flowers to create the holes).
- 4 Hold each sunflower back to back, seeds facing outward, with holes aligned.
- 5 Holding the floral wire horizontally, thread the left end through the left set of holes, and the right end through the right set of holes. Once both ends are out the other side, twist the ends together. Cut off any excess so there are no sharp ends.
- 6 Create a loop at the end of the wire so you can hang the sunflower feeder.
- 7 Hang the feeder from a tree or fence ... somewhere you can easily watch the birds feast on the seeds.
- 8 These feeders make welcome, inexpensive gifts!

PHOTOS: ZIVA K. MXTAMA, ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; WWW.MARTHASTEWART.COM

**WIN!**

**GROW YOUR OWN!**

Last year Jo used a small space in her front garden to plant a dozen sunflowers.

"They brought such joy, and were quite a conversation piece! The sunflowers turned into fantastic natural bird feeders when the flowers had died off."

"This year I plan to outdo last year's effort by planting the biggest type of sunflower, which grows up to five metres tall. Sunflower seeds can be sown directly into the ground, and a packet of the seeds is inexpensive."

**WIN! A \$2.75 packet of Skyscraper sunflower seeds from King's Seeds. 100 to be won!**

To request yours, send a stamped, addressed envelope to *King's Seeds Giveaway, PO Box 133, Mangonui Far North 0442*. King's Seeds can be purchased by mail order. For catalogue information, visit [www.kingsseeds.co.nz](http://www.kingsseeds.co.nz)

