

Hold a Garden Gathering

Your garden. Your way.



What is a Garden Gathering?

A Garden Gathering can be whatever you decide it to be. It is all about what you want to do, the people you care about, and nature.

The aim is to come together and enjoy each other's company. If you wish, you can also raise funds for people affected by ME/CFS and Long Covid. The most important part is meeting others and enjoying the outdoors.

Your Garden Gathering does two things. It raises money to help the ME Association support people affected by ME/CFS and Long Covid, and it brings a little connection to those who can feel very alone.

You do not even need to fundraise, but if you can, great!! This is part of our *Seeds of Hope* campaign, which brings the community together around nature and small moments of joy.

Can't join in person?

We understand that not everyone can take part, as ME/CFS and Long Covid affect people differently, so there is no single way to do this. We also know that some may not be well enough to join in. But please remember, you are still part of this. There are people who care about you and have not forgotten you.

For those who have the energy to take part, or who want to support the ME/CFS community, thank you.

We are creating a *Moments with Nature* video that will bring together photos and videos of gardens from across our community. So even from your bed or sofa, if you can use your phone to record a video or take a picture, you can be part of it.

Send us any of the following:

- A photo of your garden, a plant or a flower
- A short video of something that has caught your eye
- A short video of birdsong or of the rain coming down

We will bring them together so everyone can share the same moment.

You can upload your photos and videos here: <https://www.meassociation.org.uk/about-the-mea/campaigns/seeds-of-hope>

Planning made simple

You do not need to plan a big event. A few small steps over a couple of weeks are plenty. Here is one way to do it.

A few weeks before

- Pick a date and a rough time
- Decide who to invite and how, whether a text, a card or a group chat
- Set up your JustGiving page or decide how you will collect – go to <https://www.justgiving.com/charity/meassociation> to create your fundraising page

The week before

- Send a reminder with your fundraising link
- Print anything you need from the selection of resources on our website
- Plan your refreshments and keep them simple

The day before

- Get the garden ready!
- Set out chairs, your donation box and any signs
- Check the weather and have a backup in mind

On the day

- Take it at your own pace
- Welcome people, enjoy the company and let others help
- Thank your guests and share your fundraising link once more

Choosing your date and time

Pick a day that suits you. A short gathering of an hour or two is often easier than a long afternoon.

If you have ME/CFS or Long Covid, try to choose a date with some clear days around it so you can rest before and after.

Ideas to inspire you

Tea and cake in the garden

Invite friends or neighbours, boil the kettle and set out a donation jar or share your fundraising link. Then relax and enjoy.

Garden open afternoon

Invite friends and family over to visit your garden and have an informal gathering. Make it as big or small as you like.

Balcony or patio gathering

Do not have a garden? No problem. Two chairs, a drink and good company are all you need.

Get crafty

[Download our free activities and colouring sheets](#) from our website. They are designed for all ages, and you can pick what you would like to do. There are mandalas if you enjoy more detailed colouring. There are garden-themed sheets for children, plus simple activities like a daisy chain or a flower pot they can make for you. Turn your garden into an afternoon of fun, no matter what age.

Plant swap and chat

Ask everyone to bring a cutting, a seedling or a plant to swap. Share stories, swap your plants and ask for donations instead of setting prices.

Bake sale in the garden

Use our free [Tea Party Print Pack](#). It comes with bunting, flags and cake labels. Set up a table, bake your favourites and let guests give what they can. We also have other resources, and you can find them at <https://www.meassociation.org.uk/get-involved/fundraising-resources>

Simple ways to raise funds

You do not have to charge anyone anything. Keep it relaxed and welcoming. Here are a few easy ways to collect donations.

- Put out a donation jar or box with a friendly label
- Share your JustGiving link before, during and after the day
- Hold a small raffle with a few donated prizes
- Sell cuttings, seedlings, homemade jam or cakes
- Ask for donations in place of set prices at a plant swap

Add Gift Aid to boost what you raise. If a UK taxpayer ticks the Gift Aid box when they donate, the ME Association can claim an extra 25p for every pound, at no cost to them. JustGiving sorts this out for you if they donate to your page.

A few tips for the day

Photos and videos. Take some photos of your day as we would love to see them. Tell your guests first that photos might appear on The ME Association's social media or website. If anyone would rather stay out of shot, that is fine. Just check before you take their photo.

Collecting donations. Your JustGiving page is the easiest way. Or put out a donation box.

Refreshments. This is a private event for people you know. So you do not need a food hygiene certificate to share homemade treats. Get baking and enjoy.

Spread the word. Share your fundraising page before the big day. People who cannot come can still donate.

Be kind to yourself. If the weather turns or your plans change, that is fine. Keep it as small as you like. Do what works for you on the day.

If the weather changes

British weather has a mind of its own. A simple plan keeps the day stress free.

- Have an indoor spot ready, even if it is just the kitchen and a window view
- Keep a few umbrellas or a gazebo to hand if you have them
- Be ready to move the date if you need to, and let guests know

A rainy plant swap around the kitchen table still counts.

After your gathering

You did it. Here is how to wrap things up gently.

- Pay in any cash donations through your JustGiving page, or contact us for other ways at fundraising@meassociation.org.uk
- Thank your guests with a quick message and share the final total if you like
- Send us your photos and videos for the Moments with Nature video

Every penny you raise for The ME Association goes towards supporting people affected by ME/CFS and Long Covid.

Common questions

Do I need insurance or a licence?

For a private gathering of friends and family at home, you do not need a licence. If you are unsure about anything larger, email us, and we will help.

Do I need a food hygiene certificate?

No. This is a private event for people you know, so you can share homemade treats freely.

What if hardly anyone can come?

That is fine. Two people in a garden are still a Garden Gathering. You can also raise funds by sharing your JustGiving link with anyone who cannot make it.

Can I take part if I cannot host?

Yes. Send a photo or video of your garden for the Moments with Nature video.

Thank you and have fun!