Defining Horticultural Therapy
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Horticultural therapy is a term used to refer to a range of programs that use plant and gardening activities to improve the quality of people's lives -physically, socially, mentally and cognitively. Therapeutic goals, plant activities and measurable outcomes relating to each individual's needs are the principles on which the profession is based. The Canadian Horticultural Therapy Assoc (CHTA.ca) and its counterpart, the American Horticultural Therapy Assoc (AHTA.org) provide ethical, educational and professional registration guidelines to members, interested parties, and allied professionals.

A full range of programs provide horticultural therapy, recreation, adaptive gardening techniques and therapeutic landscapes to people who can benefit from interaction with nature and plants. With numerous applications practiced world-wide, horticultural therapy, HT as it is often referred, has addressed the needs of people with developmental delays, physical and mental challenges, trauma, end of life issues, as well as children, veterans, cancer patients and many others.

"Over the past decade many people have become aware of the positive benefits of human interaction with plants and gardens (AHTA, 2007). The recent surge of interest in this relationship in combination with a great increase of horticultural activities in treatment programs have led to the use of numerous terms for these programs and activities such as therapeutic horticulture, garden therapy, social horticulture, and therapeutic gardening to name a few. Because these terms are used interchangeably it is difficult to distinguish one from another and horticultural therapy has often been used as the catch-all phrase. There are in fact some crucial differences between terms.

To increase understanding of the profession, the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) has put together the following outline to define the terms recognized by AHTA that are associated with people-plant relationships.

Types of Programs

Horticultural Therapy
Horticultural therapy is the engagement of a client in horticultural activities facilitated by a trained therapist to achieve specific and documented treatment goals. AHTA believes that horticultural therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan where the process itself is considered the therapeutic activity rather than the end product. Horticultural therapy programs can be found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings.

Therapeutic Horticulture
Therapeutic horticulture is a process that uses plants and plant-related activities through which participants strive to improve their well-being through active or passive involvement. In a therapeutic horticulture program, goals are not clinically defined and documented but the leader will have training in the use of horticulture as a medium for human well-being. This type of program may be found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings.

Note that the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Assoc does not refer to social or vocational horticulture as program types as AHTA does.

Social Horticulture
Social horticulture, sometimes referred to as community horticulture, is a leisure or recreational activity related to plants and gardening. No treatment goals are defined, no therapist is present, and the focus is on social interaction and horticulture activities. A typical community garden or garden club is a good example of a social horticulture setting.

Vocational Horticulture
A vocational horticulture program, which is often a major component of a horticultural therapy program, focuses on providing training that enables individuals to work in the horticulture industry professionally, either independently or semi-independently."

American Horticultural Therapy Association (2007). *Definitions and positions*.
http://www.ahta.org/documents/FinalHTPositionPaper.pdf