

## Healing Gardens Therapeutic Gardens

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The increasing number of gardens being built at healthcare facilities signals an ever expanding interest in healing gardens and therapeutic gardens. Research on evidence based design continues to reveal and validate healthcare gardens that are able to achieve specific health outcomes. Once regarded as incremental, gardens at healthcare facilities are now often considered as essential physical and treatment facilities. Reflecting this trend and recognizing this specialization of healthcare garden design, the American Society of Landscape Architects accredits courses in this paradigm.

Interest in healing and therapeutic gardens may be part of the green movement. As larger segments of society turn to nature for solutions for health, wellness and sustainability, gardens of all kinds-- urban farms, healing gardens, home and school gardens --are playing important roles in connecting people with plants and the natural world. These gardens play a dual role - green spaces and platforms for health services including ecotherapy, horticultural therapy, nutrition counseling, infusion treatment.....

### Health Benefits from Gardens and Gardening

A growing body of evidence is demonstrating health benefits from gardens and gardening activities. Authors Fleming and Morrison, delivering a talk on *Healing Gardens Therapeutic Gardens* on behalf of Halifax's Common Roots Urban Farm (2013) identified some of the current research, listed below, that correlates health, horticulture and gardens. A more extensive bibliography is available on-line from Eva Selhub, MD and Alan Logan, ND in their 2013 book, *Your Brain on Nature The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness and Vitality*. ([www.yourbrainonnature.org](http://www.yourbrainonnature.org))

The emergence of therapeutic landscapes in healthcare environments.....

Grahn, P. et al. (2010). Using affordances as a health promoting tool in a therapeutic garden. In C. Ward Thompson, S. Bell & P. Aspinall (Eds.), *Innovative research in landscape and health* (pp.116-154). London: Taylor & Francis.

Connecting scent to the body's ability to fend off disease.....

Atsumi, T, and K Tonosaki (2007). Smelling lavender and rosemary increases free radical scavenging activity and decreases cortisol level in saliva. *Psychiatry Res* 2007; 150:89-96.

Nature providing mental restoration, an important element in health.....

Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefit of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 15(3), 169-182.

Physiological health improvements from reflexology paths.....

Li, F., Fisher, J. & Harmer, P. (2005). Improving physical function and blood pressure in older adults through cobblestone mat walking: A randomized trial. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 53(8), 1305-1312.

Views of nature influence faster health recovery.....

Ulrich, R. (1984). View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. *Science* 1984; 224:420-21.

Human need for connecting to nature.....

Wilson, E.O. (1984). *Biophilia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

### Defining Healing Gardens

The prevalence of healing gardens is widespread, both in Canada and the United States. Defining what constitutes a garden as "healing" is subject to interpretation with the term easily attached to gardens of all kinds. A recent review and categorization of healing gardens has been offered by landscape architect and horticultural therapist Elizabeth Diehl (Diehl, 2013). As the overarching term at the top of the garden hierarchy, Diehl references Naomi Sachs' term - *landscapes for health*, referring to any natural or

manipulated landscape that makes one feel good and/or contributes to positive health outcome (Sachs, 2008). Diehl lists the next level as *healing landscapes* and *healing gardens*; the former natural landscapes, the latter cultivated designed gardens for healing. On the next tier of the matrix, Diehl categorizes healing gardens into two branches; *active enabling healing gardens* and *passive restorative healing gardens*. Enabling gardens are more focused on physical healing while restorative gardens focus on garden design elements that can provide mental repose and restoration. Diehl notes that hybrids exist and that garden types are not absolutes.

Therapeutic Gardens are identified as one type of enabling healing garden according to Diehl. The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and practitioner Diehl define a therapeutic garden as one that has as its primary use, that of therapeutic intervention to “support the patient’s cure and recovery in a medical environment”. Conforming to the medical model by incorporating assessment, treatment and measurable outcomes to improve human well-being, the therapeutic garden and its programmed activity or therapy address the patient’s goals and desired outcomes. Not all gardens therefore are therapeutic gardens. Many gardens can have healing attributes and may also be a therapeutic garden, but they are not one and the same.

#### Characteristics of Therapeutic Gardens

The American Horticultural Therapy Association developed and published *Therapeutic Garden Characteristics* (1995) as those that provide:

- ✕ Scheduled and programmed activities
- ✕ Well defined perimeters
- ✕ Benign and supportive conditions
- ✕ Features modified to improve accessibility
- ✕ A profusion of plants and people/plant interactions
- ✕ Universal design
- ✕ Recognizable placemaking

#### Resources for Healing and Therapeutic Gardens:

American Horticultural Therapy Association (1995). *Therapeutic Garden Characteristics*.

[http://ahta.org/sites/default/files/attached\\_documents/TherapeuticGardenCharacteristic\\_o.pdf](http://ahta.org/sites/default/files/attached_documents/TherapeuticGardenCharacteristic_o.pdf)

Barnes, M. & Marcus, C.C. (1999). *Healing Gardens*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Canadian Healthcare Association (2009). *New Directions for Facility-based long term care*.

[http://www.cha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CHA\\_LTC\\_9-22-09\\_eng.pdf](http://www.cha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CHA_LTC_9-22-09_eng.pdf)

Diehl, E. (2013). A framework for categorizing healing gardens. *AHTA News Magazine* 41(2), 4-6.

Diehl, E. (2009). Gardens that heal. In L. Buzzell & C. Chalquist (Eds.), *Ecotherapy*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Gerlach-Spriggs, N. & Healy, V. (2010, spring). The therapeutic garden: A definition. *Healthcare and therapeutic design newsletter of the American Society of Landscape Architects*.

<http://www.asla.org/ppn/Article.aspx?id=25294>

Pollock, A., & Marshall, M. (2013). *Designing Outdoor Spaces for People With Dementia*.

Sachs, N. (2008). *Isn't every garden a healing garden: Part I*. Therapeutic Landscapes Network.

<http://www.healinglandscapes.org/blog/2008/08/>

Therapeutic Landscapes Network website [www.healinglandscapes.org](http://www.healinglandscapes.org)