

THERAPEUTIC GARDENS

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Introduction

It is well known that the population around the world is aging at an unprecedented rate and is an enduring global phenomenon, with profound implications for many facets of human life. For some elderly, aging brings declines in cognition and function that may precipitate losing independent living. In general, for those persons with advancing medical and psychiatric problems, declining cognitive and functional changes may necessitate entering assisted living or dementia residences. In either case, the role of health scientists is to find the most supportive and pleasant environments during these latter chapters of life. Economics will also play a major role in determining some of the most cost-effective ways to humanely care for the elderly, as the proportions of working individuals will greatly diminish in the future. Constructing rehabilitation centres, assisted living or dementia residence gardens that encourage autonomy and sensory stimulation is an economically sound, non-pharmacological strategy for improving the quality of life for persons needing these types of residences. Therapeutic gardens offer elderly residents the choice of leaving the residential unit for a natural setting designed to promote exercise and stimulate all the senses." A therapeutic garden can be described as being therapeutic in nature when it has been designed to meet the needs of an individual or group."

Therapeutic Gardens can be found in a variety of settings, including but not limited to hospitals, skilled nursing homes, assisted living residences, continuing care retirement communities, outpatient cancer centers, hospice residences, and other related healthcare and residential environments.

Types of Therapeutic Gardens

- ✓ Alzheimer's Gardens: Adult day care programs and dementia residences.
- ✓ Healing Gardens: Acute care hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and other healthcare facilities.
- ✓ Rehabilitation Gardens: Rehabilitation hospitals.
- ✓ Restorative Gardens: Psychiatric hospitals.
- ✓ Senior Community Gardens: Assisted living, continuing care retirement communities and other senior living residences.
- ✓ Cancer Gardens: Chemotherapy facilities.
- ✓ Enabling Gardens: Vocational schools, arboretum.
- ✓ Meditation Gardens: Religious institutions and other faith-based settings.

Sensory Considerations and Equipment

- ✓ During the planning phase of the garden, sensory considerations should be addressed. Primarily, who is the garden being designed for. Will it be for a specific population that has physical, mental or emotional challenges for example, autistic individuals will require a well-organized garden that minimizes stimulation, whereas an individual in a wheelchair will need raised garden beds. Individuals with sight impairment may benefit from chimes or bells strategically placed in the garden. The needs of the individuals using the space should be carefully considered before the building and planting phase begins.
- ✓ In addition, the equipment that will be used in the everyday care of the garden needs to be geared toward a disabled population. For example, faucets should be the lever type, and toolsets should include modified equipment for the disabled.

BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC GARDENS:

- ❖ It improves physical health and fitness in many ways.
- ❖ Boost your mental health.
- ❖ Enhance decision making ability and unleash your creativity.
- ❖ Reduces stress and tension.

- ❖ Improve your mood and eliminate negative thoughts.
- ❖ Increased social interaction with community, friends and family.
- ❖ Cures depression and anxiety.
- ❖ Increased confidence and self-esteem.
- ❖ Learn gardening and life skills.
- ❖ Better communication skills, literacy and numeracy.

Commonly used Plants in therapeutic gardens

1. Scented flowers: Blue bottle (*Centaurea cyanus* L.), Stock (*Mathiola incana* L.)
Lavandula angustifolia, *Rosa damascene*.
2. Scented Climbers: Star Jasmine, Rangoon creeper, Bower vine, Potato vine,
Madhavalata, Honey suckle.
3. Scented Shrubs: Glossy Abelia, Cape Jasmine, Kamini, Arabian Jasmine, Night-
blooming jasmine.
4. Anti-stress herbs : *Lavandula angustifolia*, *Ocimum sanctum*, Passion flower
(*Passiflora* sp.), *Rosemarinus officinalis*, Balm mint (*Melissa officinalis*), Chamomile
(*Matricaria recutita*).
5. Trees for shade (Tropical region): Indian devil tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), Indian Beech
Tree (*Pongamia pinnata*), Neem (*Azadirachta indica*).

Conclusion

The therapeutic garden is a preceding concept, it is being revived in modern times because of the comprehensive therapeutic benefits. It is a natural method to reduce stress, tension, fatigue, pain, sadness, depression and anxiety. It increases positive mood, energy and feeling of calm and encourage human-nature interactions. The significance of the discipline and the contribution it can make to advancing health and wellbeing has just begun to be understood. Continued research studies will help contribute to evidence based research and further implementation of best practices.

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