

## CATEGORY: HORTICULTURE AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

### Apolitical Groups as a Catalyst for Social Interactions

Research has revealed that social connections and interactions are an important element of human health (Lavasseur et al., 2010; Leavell et al., 2019). Social theory helps to explain the role that groups play including those with a horticulture focus. Apolitical groups like master gardener programs, garden clubs, horticulture groups (Rare Fruit Councils, American Horticulture Society etc.) and green industry trade groups affiliate using horticulture as a common bond. Their social interactions focus on networking, creating sense of community and community service. These have a high degree of volunteerism and promote social interactions.

Research where social connections involve horticulture or gardening has investigated specific groups including children participating in school gardens (Pollin & Retzlaff-Furst, 2021), refugee place-making (Goralnik et al., 2022; Marsh et al., 2023; Ramburn et al., 2023), native American community gardening (Brown, 2020), adolescent health (Knoff et al., 2022), and young cancer survivors partnered with master gardeners (Winkels et al., 2020). Impacts on socialization and behavior where horticulture-centric activity is a catalyst continues to be studied (Pollin et al., 2021; Putra et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2017; Rogers et al., 2019; Sachs et al., 2022; Day et al., 2020). This includes social prescribing, a newer strategy that is more common in Europe (Hardman et al., 2024; Leavell et al., 2019; Tierney et al., 2022).

Numerous studies on social affiliation through community gardens appears in the literature (Berg et al., 2023; Calcagni & Calenzo, 2024; Delshad, 2022; Kingsley et al., 2020). Isolation due to COVID-19, where community gardens played a role in social connections was explored by Harding et al., 2022 among others.

**For related resources refer to category: Landscapes for Health – Community Gardens, and category: Horticulture for Health Overview – Gardening Health Benefits and Pandemic Gardening.**

#### Key Organizations

[American Community Garden Association](#)

[AmericanHort](#)

[American Horticultural Society](#)

[Extension Master Gardener](#)

[GardenComm: Garden Communicators International](#)

[National Garden Clubs](#)

[Native Plant Societies](#)

[Plant Societies](#)

[Professional Organizations](#)

[The Garden Club of America](#)

#### Books, journals & epublications on horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions/apolitical groups

[American Journal of Community Psychology](#)

Nettle, C. (2014). *Community gardening as social action*. Routledge.

[Public Garden magazine](#) (American Public Gardens Association)

[Research Digest](#) (Children & Nature Network)

*The American Gardener* magazine (American Horticultural Society)

Truong, S., Gray, T., Tracey, D.K., & Ward, K.S. (2018). *The impact of Royal Botanic Gardens' Community*

Greening Program on perceived health, wellbeing, and social benefits in social housing communities in NSW. Western Sydney University.

## Research & articles on horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions/apolitical groups

Recently published selected research & articles:

- Anderson, A.G., Messer, I., & Langellotto, G.A. (2021). [Gardeners' perceptions of U.S. native plants are influenced by ecological information and garden group affiliation](#). *HortTechnology*, 31(4).
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### **Examples of horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions/apolitical groups**

Garden Club of Madison install Gothic High Tunnel hoop houses in New Jersey.

<https://www.gcamerica.org/news/get?id=3586>

Hope Garden at Robins Air Force Base, GA is used by active military personnel of the 78<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing, primarily males average age 30 and those with restricted movements prior to deployment, for leisure activities, physical exercise, therapeutic horticulture and workshops for families and children.

<https://www.georgiamastergardeners.org/news/hope-gardens>

New Roots Fresh Farm Community Garden, El Cajon CA and the New Roots Community Farm near City Heights, CA provide garden space for immigrants and refugees in a collaboration between International Rescue Committee and Kaiser Permanente.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/lifestyle/home-and-garden/story/2020-02-06/learning-social-connections-grow-in-community-gardens>

Professional Organizations with a horticulture focus number more that 35 as listed and linked by the American Horticultural Society including American Community Garden Assoc., American Pomological Society, American Seed Trade Association, Arbor Day Foundation, and Green Roots for Healthy Cities.

<https://ahsgardening.org/gardening-resources/societies-clubs-organizations/professional/>

Rodgers County Master Gardener Activities identifies activities that create educational, social and horticultural bonds.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGH-Lt\\_GtoE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGH-Lt_GtoE)

Sarasota Garden Club, Sarasota, FL.

Activities are social and community focused & include volunteering at botanical gardens, Ringling Secret Garden, Tidewell grief therapy, Orange Blossom Community Garden, and more.

<https://sarasotagardenclub.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

Sunshine Community Compost is a Sarasota based non-profit that promotes composting, reducing food waste, using food scraps while collaborating with communities.

<https://www.sunshinecommunitycompost.org/about-us>

### **Videos, webinars & websites of horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions/apolitical groups**

A Community Garden in Tampa uses this as a platform for socializing and bonding.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KhQDcGRj1k>

*Building Community One Garden at a time* concept presented at TEDxNewBedford, sharing how these school gardens are horticultural platforms that can create connections and strengthen community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oYlo3YvdPc>

*Children and Nature Network's resources online*: benefits of nature, equity & inclusion, families, youth.

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/resource-hub/resources/>

*Gardening as a social activity* video highlights university students connecting through gardening.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK5IBx2NI5k>

*It's Official: Gardening is Good for Your Health* video from the University of Colorado Boulder identifies community gardens, nutrition, mental health, social benefits, access to green space contributing to health.

*Saving the world with gardening* TedXAdelaide looks at this activity as a platform for physical activity, inclusion and more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7gB1OxksUM>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations & settings including therapeutic goals addressing social interactions (plan/plant & eat the rainbow, lettuce be different)

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/social/>

### **Related organizations**

Rare Fruit Councils

[National Association of Landscape Professionals](#)

[American Public Garden Association](#) (APGA)

[Children & Nature Network](#)

[Perennial Plant Association](#)

Written & compiled by Lesley Fleming Oct 2021; revised in Nov 2022 by Lesley Fleming, Bree Stark; revised in 2024 by Lesley Fleming