

Florida Horticulture for Health Network – Resource Hub

CATEGORY: LANDSCAPES FOR HEALTH

Enabling Gardens & Adaptive Gardening

“Enabling gardens seek to reduce physical barriers and increase physical activity as a means of promoting physical health; Diehl’s three models - demonstration, eldercare and Alzheimer care gardens are used for diverse populations” (Fleming, 2021; Diehl, 2013). Enabling gardens can be found at all types of gardens where physical barriers are minimized including home gardens, school gardens, community gardens, defiant gardens, botanical and therapeutic gardens. More recent research is investigating people with disabilities and their perceptions and use of urban parks, green spaces and rehabilitation camps (Wojnowska-Heciak et al., 2022; Perry, 2021; Wilhelmsen et al., 2023). While the research literature is less robust than other landscapes for health areas, online information about enabling gardens and adaptive gardening is expanding - USA Botanical Garden site identifies wheelchair accessible gardens; NYBG *Beyond Barriers* video explores navigating gardens; and [From the Ground Up](#) video has information on adaptive tools from Virginia Farm Bureau.

For related resources refer to Landscapes for Health category: designed landscape elements; therapeutic gardens; and Horticultural Therapy & Health Services category: horticultural therapy.

Key Organizations

[ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#)

[AgrAbility](#)

[American Horticultural Therapy Association](#)

[American Society of Landscape Architects – Professional Practice Universal Design](#)

[Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#)

[The Eden Alternative](#)

[USA Botanical Gardens list of accessible gardens](#)

Books, journals & e-publications on enabling gardens & adaptive gardening

AgrAbility & Arthritis Foundation. (2004). [Arthritis and gardening](#).

AgrAbility (2021). [The toolbox assistive technology database](#).

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

Carman, J. (2021). [Design for generations](#). (case studies).

Cassidy, P. (2011). *The illustrated practical guide to gardening for seniors*. Lorenz Books.

Cooper Marcus, C. & Sachs, N. (2014). *Therapeutic landscapes: An evidence-based approach to designing healing gardens and restorative outdoor spaces*. John Wiley and Sons. Inc.

Helphand, K. (2006). *Defiant gardens: Making gardens in wartime*. Trinity University Press.

Rothert, G. (1994). *The enabling garden: Creating barrier-free gardens*. Taylor Trade Publishing.

Winterbottom, D., Wagenfeld, A. (2026). *Therapeutic gardens: Designs for healing spaces*. Taylor & Francis.

Research & articles on enabling gardens & adaptive gardening

Recently published selected research & articles:

Airhart, D.L., & Airhart, K.M. (2024). Inside space and adaptive gardening: Design, techniques, and tools. In *Horticulture as Therapy* (pp. 317-353). CRC Press.

- American Society of Landscape Architects. (2021). [Universal design: Gardens](#).
- Beh, J., Yew, M., Tan, K., & Rayner, J.P (2025). [Critical therapeutic landscape design elements for cognitive impairments in the Royal Talbot rehabilitation centre.](#)” *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, 19(3).
- Bravo, M. (2015). [A guide for making community gardens accessible for all members](#). *Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo*. Highroad Fellowship Reports.
- Cheeseman, K., Goh, K., Hatt, K. et al. (2020). [Evaluation of the Guelph Enabling Garden](#). Guelph, ON: Community Engaged Scholarship Institute.
- Denham, A.D. (2025). [Designing and installing a disability accessible teaching garden](#). Thesis: University of Arkansas.
- Diehl, L. (2013). A framework for categorizing healing gardens. *AHTA News Magazine*, 41(2), 4-6.
- Diehl, R.M. (2019). Perspective: Psychological accessibility—A perspective on therapeutic garden design. In R. Haller, K. Kennedy & C. Capra (Eds.), *The profession and practice of horticultural therapy*. CRC Press.
- Dillon, I., & Green, J. (2021). [Universal design](#). American Society of Landscape Architects.
- Everett, G. (2025). [Understanding enabling gardens](#). Therapeutic Gardening Series. Garden Club of Wiscasset.
- Fleming, L. (2021). Horticulture for health framework. *Acta Hort.*, 1330.
- Fleming, L., & Carroll, K. (2016). [The accessible children’s rainforest garden at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens](#). *Eatbreathegarden*.
- Fleming, L. (2013). Recent trends in adaptive gardening tool use in HT settings. *AHTA News Magazine*, 41(1).
- Fleming, L. (2011). The Buehler Family Foundation Enabling Garden, Naples Florida. *AHTA News Magazine*, 39(3).
- Gendall, J. (2010). [Senior circuit \(A playground in London’s Hyde Park is designed for older exercisers\)](#). *Landscape Architecture*, 100(9).
- Greyling, S., Verhoef, S., & Tempelhoff, W. (2025). [A braille trail for all: Inclusive design in the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden](#). *African Journal of Disability*, 14(1).
- Kavanagh, J. (2024). Outdoor space and adaptive gardening: Design, techniques, and tools. In *Horticulture as therapy* (pp. 287-316). CRC Press.
- Kids Gardening. (n.d.). [Create an accessible garden for those of all physical abilities](#).
- Lindsay, R. (n.d.). [Designing gardens accessible to all](#). *Ecological Landscape Alliance*.
- Marcaccio, A. (2020). Ramps and garden accessibility. *Digging In*, 6(1).
- Marina, P.C., Ángeles, R.M., & Yazıcı, A. (2024). [Exploring areas for improvement through inclusive design: Taking gardening as a worthy topic](#). *The International Journal of Design Education*, 18(2).
- Morgan, S.C. (2019). Considerations and adaptations to safely accommodate program participants. In R. Haller, K. Kennedy & C. Capra (Eds.), *The profession and practice of horticultural therapy*. CRC Press.
- Osman, N., Archibald, T., & Peterson, D. J. (2025). Developing disability-inclusive programs to empower farmers: Lessons learned from AgrAbility. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 32(2).
- Perry, M., Cotes, L., Horton, B. et al. (2021). ["Enticing" but not necessarily a "Space Designed for Me": Experiences of urban park use by older adults with disability](#). *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 18(2).
- Piskin, B.A., & Akdeniz, N.S. (2023). [How can people with disabilities use the outdoors? An assessment within the framework of disability standards](#). *Soc Indic Res*, 167.
- Raske, M. (2010) [Nursing home quality of life: Study of an enabling garden](#). *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 53(4).

- Selanon, P., Dejnirattisai, S., Naknawaphan, A., & Karnkul, K. (2025). [Integrating social and therapeutic models in public space design: A narrative review approach to meeting the needs of all types of disabilities](#). *Thammasat Review*, 28(1).
- Tigere, B., & Moyo, T. (2022). [Disability-inclusive community development: A case of a community garden in Limpopo province in South Africa](#). *African Journal of Disabilities*, 11.
- Wang, X. (2024). [Translating gardens into accessible multisensory tours for blind and partially sighted visitors: An exploratory case study](#). *Univ Access Inf Soc.*, 24.
- Wilhelmsen, T., Lannem, AM., Sørensen, M. et al. (2023). [Experiences of participants with spinal cord injury at an active rehabilitation camp](#). *J Funct Morphol Kinesiol.*, 9(1).
- Williams, J., Monaghan, P., Telg, R., & Voelker, S. (2022). [An introduction to including individuals with special needs in the garden: What Extension professionals need to know about accessibility, safety and educational programming](#). University of Florida IFAS.

Examples of enabling gardens & adaptive gardening

Angie's Garden is a rooftop healing garden at The Angie Fowler Adolescent and Young Adult Institute at University Hospital's Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Ohio that encourages children, families and visitors to play and enjoy hands-on exploration and moveable play structures.

<https://www.uhhospitals.org/rainbow/services/pediatric-cancer-and-blood-disorders/angies-garden>

Brandermill Woods Alzheimer's Garden is a contained garden for people living with dementia and their families, with non-toxic plants, seating areas and water features in this safe secured garden.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/brandermill-alzheimers-garden/>

Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital has an enabling garden as part of its rehab services in Malvern, PA.

<https://healinglandscapes.org/the-enabling-garden-at-bryn-mawr-rehab-hospital/>

Buehler Enabling Garden at Chicago Botanic Garden in Illinois features raised beds, container gardens, adaptive tool display, water elements along with teaching sessions, and a walking tour app.

<https://www.chicagobotanic.org/gardens/enabling>

Center for Disability Services and Adult Wellness Programs' enabling garden and its Five Senses garden is located onsite at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkC7_DJHGS4

<https://wmich.edu/disabilitycenter/adultwellness>

Camp Patriot in NW Montana is exclusively for wounded and disabled Veterans of all generations, set on a 90-acre ranch using activities like homesteading, gardening, and outdoor activities with a purpose of "giving back to those who have given".

<https://www.usvetconnect.com/adventure/camp-patriot>

Farm Again program administered by the University of Georgia's College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and College of Family and Consumer Sciences provide technical assistance and educational program to new/beginning veteran farmers and farmers with disabilities through programs like AgrAbility and Farm Boot Camp.

<https://www.farmagain.com/>

FrontLine Gardens 501c3 organization provides injured in the line of duty or suffering from PTSD Veterans and law enforcement officers with raised on elevated garden beds at their personal

residence and a custom therapeutic gardening program in partnership with a vet center or law enforcement trauma therapist.

<https://frontlinegardens.org/>

Guelph Enabling Garden is a garden for use by anyone, but especially for community members with physical and cognitive challenges. Scheduled workshops are available and horticultural therapy is delivered onsite.

<http://www.enablinggarden.org/>

Kansas AgrAbility Project's purpose to directly assist Kansas farmers, veterans etc. who have become injured, have a health condition or a disability, to remain actively engaged in agriculture/horticulture.

<https://www.agrability.ksu.edu/>

Kernan Rehabilitation Center in Baltimore, MD. is a Sacred Place enabling garden that uses different paving materials on its path to be inclusive of people working to regain their mobility in this clinical setting. https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/umms-rehabilitation-orthopedic-institute-2/

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, Richmond, VA promotes accessibility with various elements: info on pathways, free admission for personal care attendants, low-sensory areas and accessible grounds.

<https://wheelchairtraveling.com/richmond-virginia-botanical-garden-wheelchair-access/>

Maude's Garden in Seattle Washington, is a sensory-rich garden designed specifically for individuals with memory loss and their care partners with intent that they have opportunities to explore, connect and foster wellness through therapeutic horticulture programming.

<https://themoryhub.org/garden>

Michigan State University's Enabling Gardens was inspired by Gene Rothert's book *The Enabling Garden* featuring elements like lower and higher container gardens for seated or standing gardening. A brochure about the garden can be downloaded.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/tollgate/gardens/the_enabling_gardens

MS/BCMG Enabling Garden is a project of the Brazoria County Master Gardeners in Texas, grant funded through community gifts and the Multiple Sclerosis Entrepreneurs Program. It includes accessible entries, varying heights of beds, and a tool shed with adaptive tools.

<https://txmg.org/brazoria/bees-education-station/enabling-garden/>

North Carolina Botanical Garden and BeAM network of design and fabrication makerspaces at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have developed an interactive adaptive tool display with hands-on access with QR codes to product info.

<https://ncbg.unc.edu/engagement/therapeutic-horticulture/adaptive-tools/>

Naples Botanical Garden Buehler Family Foundation Enabling Garden in Naples, FL. is an example of a public garden designed specifically with enabling features, reducing physical barriers to gardening.

<https://archive.naplesnews.com/lifestyle/neapolitan/naples-botanical-garden-offers-enabling-ideas-to-suit-every-yard-ep-390750625-339802782.html>

Portland Memory Garden in Oregon is a collaborative effort designed to meet the needs of people with memory disorders and care partners; open to the public and free of charge.

<https://www.portlandmemorygarden.org/>

Sacred Place at the League for People with Disabilities, Baltimore, MD incorporates a babbling brook, rain curtain and adaptive tools as multi-sensory design features in the garden in addition to experiences for gardening.

https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/the-league-for-people-with-disabilities-inc/

Spalding Rehabilitation Hospital in Charlestown, MA has a therapeutic walking trail, activity spaces, and uses a performance benefits metric for identifying outcomes for staff, patients and public.

<https://www.landscapeperformance.org/case-study-briefs/spalding-rehabilitation-hospital#:~:text=A%20therapeutic%20garden%20with%20a,bands%20oserving%20as%20distance%20markers.>

St Peter's Hospital courtyard and enabling garden in Hamilton, Ontario has shade and seating areas, and raised beds for staff and patients to tend to communal gardens, pick fresh raspberries and relax.

<https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/share/outdoor-spaces/>

The Activities Garden at Arbor Terrace –Middleton, NJ. independent living, assisted living and dementia care residence provides outdoor plant filled space for a range of activities for residents, families and programming.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/the-activities-garden-at-arbor-terrace-middleton-nj/>

The Enabling Garden in Altoona, Iowa is a cooperative project involving the Polk County Master Gardeners, using raised beds and vertical gardening to demonstrate accessible gardening principles.

<https://polkcountymastergardeners.org/Enabling-Garden>

The Universal Garden at the Arboretum in Bolestraszyce Poland has six parts – Sensory Garden Tyfloplanetarium etc. where universal design has guided the outdoor space.

https://bolestraszyce.com/images/Publikacje/The_Universal_Garden_at_the_Arboretum_and_the_Department_of_Physiography_in_Bolestraszyce.pdf

Toronto Botanical Garden and its outdoor wheelchair accessible activities are designed as inclusive, especially for people with spinal cord injuries; video highlights options and opportunities.

<https://torontobotanicalgarden.ca/explore/a-garden-for-all/>

Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Boylston MA offers special hours for low sensory, less crowded visits to the garden, paved pathways, garden designed for visually impaired and mobility challenged guests, partnering with HMEA'S Autism Resource Central for Sensory-Friendly Evenings.

<https://nebg.org/accessibility/>

Vera A. Scherer Garden at Morristown High School in NJ has accessible features for special needs students.

<https://ngb.org/2021-grant-recipient-vera-a-scherer-garden/>

Videos, webinars & websites on enabling gardens & adaptive gardening

& Thou Shalt Honor: an interview by D. Bell with geriatric physician Dr. Bill Thomas on The Eden Alternative as “the reinterpretation of the environment elders live in” and respect for their agency.

<https://www.pbs.org/thoushalthonor/eden/index.html>

Accessible Gardens information from Univ. of Florida provides ideas for paths, beds, and adaptive methods and tools.

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/accessible-gardens/>

Accessible Garden Paths on Kids Gardening website offers downloadable resources, tips for materials, and links to Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

<https://kidsgardening.org/resources/designing-a-school-garden-designing-accessible-garden-paths/>

Adaptive Gardening Tools short video from Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation introduces tools useful for adaptive gardening.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=valM2cyImd4>

AgriAbility Publication Database provides numerous online publications on topics related to disabilities and gardening/horticulture/agriculture, assistive technologies and accessible tools.

http://www.agrability.org/pub-database/?_paged=2

Beyond Barriers: Accessing Nature for People with Disabilities video from NY Botanical Garden expands beyond physical barriers and accessibility to include navigating sites, therapeutic horticulture and nature interactions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPhHwyhOaYo&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U&index=6>

Enabling Garden, part of the Discovery Garden Skagit County Washington State location, has raised beds, low espalier apple trees, sitting ledges and special garden for people with visual impairments.

<https://www.skagitmg.org/home/discovery-garden/enabling-garden/>

Enabling Gardens: The Practical Side of Horticultural Therapy webpage from Rutgers New Jersey Agriculture Experiment Station offers historical information and design considerations.

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1208/>

From the Ground Up video provides information on tools for disabled gardeners, from the Virginia Farm Bureau.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M5YUBRMjV8&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U&index=2>

GardenTech: How to Create a More Accessible Garden. Discussion on three methods that make gardening accessible to people with physical limitations.

<https://www.gardentech.com/blog/gardening-and-healthy-living/gardening-for-everyone-creating-accessible-gardens>

Guide to Wheelchair Accessible Raised Garden Beds video shows how this can be done, suggested materials, and reasons why this is so important.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtFTUwqo2D8&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U&index=5>

Invention Makes Gardening Possible for Disabled People video demonstrates ideas for improving and adapting gardening methods, tools and beds, with transcript available.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jHohj9C1_8&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U&index=4

Is Your Garden Accessible to Everyone video presents design ideas from paths to garden beds, with a focus on improving accessibility.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfJgOJrl3fw&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U&index=3>

National Center on Accessibility is a program at the Eppley Center for Parks and Public Lands, with training, assessments, and technical assistance on accessibility design, infrastructure and best practices for parks, meant to enhance park experiences for people with disabilities.

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/eppley/nca/index.html>

People with Disabilities and Sustainable Environment - Jerusalem Botanical Garden, Israel video discusses how activities in environmental sustainability can benefit people with disabilities, providing opportunities for volunteerism, employment, and social engagement.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6XZVG3xppE&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQIsudc4AOIZN2rrlHSFqYLB&index=4>

Tarrant County Master Gardener Enabling Beds Tour video shares tips for gardening, raised beds, plants, highlighting accessibility features.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRygJMVXakY&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQIsudc4AOIZN2rrlHSFqYLB&index=3>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers 200+TH activities across populations, tested by practitioners with a range of populations. (activities: [Adaptive Gardening for Repetitive Motion Disorders](#), [Daily Gardening Tasks](#), [Hardwood Stem Cuttings](#), [Lettuce be Different](#)).

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

The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability, headquartered at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Health Professions promotes programs and resources for people with disabilities including accessible gardening, adaptations to the garden, gardener, and plants.

<https://www.nchpad.org/resources/getting-started-with-accessible-gardening/>

The Riverwood Conservancy Enabling Garden in Mississauga Ontario uses its 150-acre parcel of land with meadow, creeks, wetlands, trails and gardens to provide connections to nature, experiential environmental education and curriculum linked school programming.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSFgN1BswDo&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQIsudc4AOIZN2rrlHSFqYLB&index=2>

The University of Maine bulletin #2754 Building an Accessible V-Bed Garden.

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2754e/>

Tools and Strategies for Adaptive Gardening video from horticultural therapist Teresia Hazen at Stenzel Therapeutic Garden at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital (2019).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAUgw4K5P-Y>

Toronto Botanical Garden and its outdoor wheelchair accessible activities are designed as inclusive, especially for people with spinal cord injuries; video highlights options and opportunities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IFL-7Rughl&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQLsudc4AOIZN2rrlHSHFqYLB&index=5>

University of Florida: IFAS Extension Gardening in the Panhandle: *Enabling Technique for Raised Bed Gardens*. Video discusses the advantages of raised beds and provides instructions for building them.

<https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/tag/enabling-gardening/>

USA Botanical Gardens' list of accessible gardens across the U.S. also includes links to the gardens, where additional information is available.

<https://wheelchairtraveling.com/usa-botanical-gardens-wheelchair-accessible-travel-tips/>

Useful Gardening Tools for People with Physical Limitations video presented by master gardeners in Baltimore County.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YQdiB_r1bU&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQLJY4SS1pgtNeZtFWjMxp49U

Vera A. Scherer Garden at Morristown High School in NJ has accessible features for special needs students.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMMKgYsIO6g>

Related organizations

[American Cancer Society](#)

[Arthritis Foundation](#)

[Brain Injury Association of America](#)

[Center of Design for an Aging Society](#)

[Cerebral Palsy Foundation](#)

[Disabled American Veterans](#)

[Muscular Dystrophy Association](#)

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke](#)

[National Institute on Aging](#)

[The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD](#)

[Wounded Warrior Project](#)

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