

**CATEGORY: POPULATIONS/PROGRAMS**

## **Grief and Bereaved Populations and Programs**

Extensive literature exists on grief and bereavement, with many organizations offering services and support for grief and loss. The research literature is primarily from the field of psychology, with newer approaches using an integrated process model recognizing five dimensions of grief: cognitive, social, spiritual, emotional and physical (Guldin & Leget, 2023). Practitioners are becoming more aware of different types of grief (Nursing Fundamentals, n.d.) including ambiguous loss, (Dreese, 2025), shadowloss, (Dreese, 2025), prolonged grief, acute grief, collective grieving, memorialization practices, disenfranchised grief, and non-death loss (dementia, inability to conceive a child, losing jobs, divorces). Ecological grief is appearing in the literature with impacts on children and young people in particular (Bailey, & Gerrish, 2025).

Plant-based and nature-based programs, therapeutic gardening or horticultural therapy is available for bereaved people, but is limited. Studies on HT used with bereaved populations is expanding (Boisvert & Shea, 2025; Lavin et al., 2020; Nadeem et al., 2025). Expressive arts and expressive art therapies, which can include HT/TH or plant-centric activities, are at times included in these modalities. It is interesting to note that plants, particularly flowers have long been used in rituals and as symbols involved in these stages of life.

Care farming, more evident in Europe, is being used for grief support, with research on this intervention appearing in journals (Cacciatore et al., 2020; Thieleman et al., 2021). Program examples, with several from the UK, have been implemented for loss of babies or children using therapeutic horticulture. Other topics appearing in the literature recently: human composting and green funerals (Flanigan, 2024), interventions for coping with child or stillbirth deaths (Boisvert, 2024; Chan et al., 2025), and nature-based interventions for grief support (Dean et al., 2023; Corbett, 2026). Memory gardens continue to be used with this population as places of remembrance, sanctuaries and restorative green spaces. Several are listed under program models.

**For related resources refer to category: Populations/Horticulture Programs in Specific Settings – Mental Health and Trauma Recovery; category: Horticultural Therapy & Health Services – all sections; and category: Landscapes for Health – therapeutic gardens and restorative gardens.**

### **Key Organizations**

[AARP.org](#) - grief and loss program

[Center for Loss & Life Transition](#)

[Hospice Foundation of America](#)

[National Alliance for Children's Grief](#)

[The Compassionate Friends](#) (with 500 chapters)

[The Mark Wandall Foundation](#)

**Books, journals & epublications on grieving and bereaved populations and plant-based programs**

[Death Studies](#) journal.

Harris, DL., & Winokuer, HR. (2019). *Principles and practice of grief counseling*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

Chapter 7: Working with bereaved individuals in the grief counseling setting.

Chapter 11: [The clinician's toolbox: Therapeutic modalities and techniques in the context of grief.](#)

[Journal of Death and Dying.](#)

[Journal of Loss & Trauma.](#)

Kessler, D. (2019). *Finding meaning: The sixth stage of grief*. Simon & Schuster.

Neimeyer, RA. (Ed.). (2012). *Techniques of grief therapy (Series in death, dying, and bereavement)*. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Routledge.

Thompson, BE., & Neimeyer, RA. (2014). *Grief and the expressive arts: Practices for creating meaning*. Routledge.

[We Need Not Walk Alone](#) magazine

## Research & articles on grieving and bereaved populations and plant-based programs

Recently published selected research & articles:

Bailey, S., & Gerrish, N. (2025). Ecological grief: How can we bear this together? *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 13(3).

Bodin, K., & Cassidy, R. (2019). Learning from teaching: Creating curricula for end-of-life therapies courses. *AHTA Magazine*, 47(1).

Boisvert, K., & Shea, J. (2025). Vermonter's painful grief and horticultural methods for bereavement. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 35(1).

Boisvert, K. (2024). A qualitative study on the prevalence and impact of horticultural methods as a grieving mechanism within Vermont-based and virtual Infant/Fetal Bereavement Services. *University of Vermont*.

Cacciatore, J., Gorman, R., & Thieleman, K. (2020). Evaluating care farming as a means to care for those in trauma and grief. *Health Place*, 62.

Chan, CH., Zhang, SS., Ng, CN. et al. (2025). A call for interdisciplinary bereavement care in miscarriage and stillbirth: A stepped-care model approach. *Hong Kong Medical Journal*, 31(4).

Cleary, A., Dean, J., Pollock, D. et al. (2022) Nature-based interventions for bereavement care. A scoping review protocol. *JBI Evidence Synthesis*, 20(5).

Corbett, AT. (2026). From military service to civilian life: Nature intervention in VHA psychiatric care. Thesis: *Liberty University*.

Dean, J., Cleary, A., Ma, T. et al. (2023). Scoping review of nature-based interventions in bereavement care: What are the implications for perinatal loss? *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 8(1),

de Los Santos, A., Daiz, BG., & Rosales, EL. (2022). Coronaphobia and coping among the bereaved: The mediating role of gardening during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Nurse Media Journal of Nursing*, 12(1).

Dreese, D. (2025). The ecopsychology of green burial. *Psychology Today.com*.

Dreese, D. (2025). [Understanding shadowloss: An interview with Cole Imperi](#). *Psychology Today.com*.

Dreese, D. (2024). [The stone pathway that leads to healing from grief](#). *Psychology Today.com*.

Flanigan, RL. (2024). [Anticipatory grief: How to manage mourning a loss before it happens](#). *AARP.org*.

Flanigan, RL. (2024). [Human composting: A new take on the 'green' funeral](#). *AARP.org*.

Gonzalez, MT., Hartig, T., Patil, GG. et al. (2020). Therapeutic horticulture in clinical depression: A mixed method systematic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 61(5).

- Gorman, R., & Caciatore, J. (2020). Care-farming as a catalyst for healthy and sustainable lifestyle choices in those affected by traumatic grief. *NJAS: Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 92(00339).
- Gorman, R. & Cacciatore, J. (2017). Cultivating our humanity: A systematic review of care farming & traumatic grief. *Health Place*, 47.
- Griffin, C. (2025). Horticultural therapy enhances end-of-life care. *HTI Newsletter*.
- Guldin, MB, & Leget, C. (2023). [The integrated process model of loss and grief – An interprofessional understanding](#). *Death Studies*, 48(7).
- Larsen, J. (2025). The house remains dark until the mother awakens: The lived experience of using natural practices for mental health healing in postpartum population. Dissertation: *Pacifica Graduate Institute*.
- Lavin, J., Lavin, C., & Feldman, D. (2020). Determining the effect of group flower arranging sessions on caregiver self-efficacy and stress levels in an in-patient hospice. *Journal of Death and Dying*, 84(2).
- Lazzara, J., Thieleman, K., & Cacciatore, J. (2026). The quiet, beautiful, intentional space to grieve and remember. *Wellbeing, Space and Society*, 100383.
- Lin, YJ., Lin, CY., & Li, YC. (2014). Planting hope in loss and grief: Self-care applications of horticultural therapy for grief caregivers in Taiwan. *Death Studies*, 38(9).
- Machado, MM., & Swank, JM. (2018). Therapeutic gardening: A counseling approach for bereavement from suicide. *Death Studies*, 43(2).
- Marsh, P., & Spinaze, A. (2016). Community gardens as sites of solace and end-of-life support: A literature review. *Int J Palliat Nurs.*, 22(5).
- Miavitz, EM. (1998). Grief gardening: A horticultural therapy program for the bereaved. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 9.
- Nadeem, MB., Habib, E., & Hamayal, M. (2025). Horticulture therapy as a complementary intervention in palliative care: A narrative review. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care*, 21(4).
- Ng, KST., Sia, A., Ng, MKW. et al. (2018). Effects of horticultural therapy on Asian older adults: A randomized controlled trial. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15 (8).
- Nurlila, RU., & La Fua, J. (2022). Horticultural therapy reduces stress in elderly grieving in the Muna Islands, Indonesia: Horticultural therapy. *Indonesian Journal of Health Sciences Research and Development*, 4(1).
- Nursing Fundamentals. (n.d.). Ch. 17 Grief and loss. *NCBI.NLM.NIH.gov*.
- Patterson, P., McDonald, FEJ., Kelly-Dalgety, EK. et al. (2021). Good Grief program for young people bereaved by familial cancer. *BMC Palliative Care*, 20(1).
- Piper, E. (2019). Towards healing ambiguous grief with nature-based expressive arts therapy, embodiment, and mindfulness: A literature review. Thesis: *Lesley University*.
- Psychology Tools. (2024). [Psychological assessment tools for mental health: Grief, loss & bereavement](#).
- Spillman, ST. (2026). [Helping young hearts heal: A guide to grief support for children](#). *Snappywords.com*.
- Stanko, MC. (2023). Therapeutic horticulture for adults experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one. University of Florida: ORH 4905 coursework, Certificate of Horticultural Therapy.
- Thieleman, K., Cacciatore, J., & Gorman, R. (2021). 'Perhaps something of beauty can grow:' Experiences of care farming for grief. *Death Studies Advance Online publications*.
- Tynan, A. (2022). Growing grief: Cultivating life after death in the garden. *Thanatos*, 11.

## **Examples of grieving and bereaved populations plant-based programs and gardens**

*AIDS Memorial Grove* San Francisco memorializes those who died of the disease in a nature-inspired setting.

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

*Angel's Garden at Virtua Hospital* – Vorhees, NJ is an outdoor sanctuary garden for parents who have lost a baby, a place to honor their short lives.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/angels-garden-at-virtua-hospital-vorhees-nj/>

*Benaroya Hall Garden of Remembrance* Seattle is a memorial to 8,000+ Washington citizens who gave their lives in service of the U.S. since 1941, with reflecting pools and walls of granite.

<https://www.seattlesymphony.org/benaroyahall/about/garden-of-remembrance>

*Bloedel Reserve* in Bainbridge, WA offers grief groups in their nature setting.

[https://bloedelreserve.org/nature\\_well-being/](https://bloedelreserve.org/nature_well-being/)

*Children's Memorial Parks* in Tucson Arizona has several sites where engraved names of children appear on granite walls at Children's Memorial Park, and on metal walls of the Children's Memorial Garden in Michael Perry Park in Spanish and English.

<https://tucsoncleanandbeautiful.org/adopt-a-park-public-areas/other-programs/childrens-memorial-parks/>

*Garden of Hope* and a horticultural therapy program honor family of loved ones.

[https://irp.cdn-website.com/c876b665/files/uploaded/AHTAJournal\\_2025Issue1.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/c876b665/files/uploaded/AHTAJournal_2025Issue1.pdf)

*Healing Pathways program and gardens* at The Deanery Project non-profit in Ships Harbour, Nova Scotia, has created physical space that nurture reflection, connection and renewal, as well as events like All Souls' Day for gathering, remembrance and healing.

<https://thedeaneryproject.nationbuilder.com/>

*Hope Grows* 501c3 non-profit (PA) provides emotional/mental health services and counseling to family caregivers using in-person and virtual counseling, support services, Therapeutic respite activities, wellness kits, bereavement packets and on-site programming.

<https://hopegrows.org/about/>

*Hospice of Central Pennsylvania* offers *A New Leaf* program to explore how nature helps bereaved heal and find a way forward, delivered by HT practitioner Betty Guise.

<https://www.hospiceofcentralpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Bereavement-NL-April-June-2022-REV.pdf>

[Madeline Mission Memorial Children's Garden in Brunswick](#) on the Parkview campus of Mid Coast Hospital is a place other than a cemetery to remember children and babies using butterflies with names of their loved ones.

*Saint Alphonsus COVID-19 Memorial Gardens* honors healthcare workers, inspired by an Emily Dickinson Poem, with 3 locations in Boise, Napa Ontario and Baker City with the gardens called *Where the Angels Are*, for remembrance and reflection.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLumHUx6vKw&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQLVc4\\_zALMAe3P8CyVqzTiZ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLumHUx6vKw&list=PLRqQz3pL4HQLVc4_zALMAe3P8CyVqzTiZ)

Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary's (New England) course "[Creating an Herbal Toolkit for End of Life Care](#)" in Florida includes herb knowledge, nervous system and plant interactions with a focus on this stage, family and care partners who would be involved.

<https://sagemountain.com/>

The SUDC UK offers bereavement support weekend retreats to parents who have lost a child or a baby in conjunction with *Hope Springs Gardening* that delivers therapeutic gardening workshops.

[www.sudc.org.uk](http://www.sudc.org.uk)

Teddys Wish demonstrates how gardening can be a helpful, healing activity for those in deep grief in their bereavement support weekend retreats to parents who have lost a child or a baby in conjunction with *Hope Springs Gardening*.

[www.teddyswish.org](http://www.teddyswish.org)

[The Mark Wandall Foundation](#) programming from this 501c3 supports children and teens in grief with Comfort Zone Camp (Florida) and equine-assisted learning as well as scholarships. [A listing of resources](#) is available on their website.

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

*The Worst Girl Gang Ever* is a large online membership platform and community supporting people who have experienced baby loss or miscarriage. *Hope Springs Gardening* delivers an online "sowing the seeds of hope" workshop in partnership with this organization.

<https://theworstgirlgangever.co.uk>

Twigs Community Gardens in Swindon, UK. has a new "Garden of Hope". Plans for an 8-10 week program for a bereavement support group at TWIGS in this space and using TWIGS resources for nature-based and HT activities in conjunction with *Hope Springs Gardening* have been delivered here.

[www.twigscommunitygardens.org.uk](http://www.twigscommunitygardens.org.uk)

### **Videos, websites & webinars on grief and programming for bereaved populations**

AARP.org website includes articles in their caregiving section related to grief, end of life issues, hospice, and human composting – a new take on the green funeral.

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/grief-loss-end-of-life/?cmp=RDRCT-bf1da46e-20210730>

*Books That Carried Me Forward* online article, with a listing of books from bereaved parent S. Panus, also provides insight into reading as a strategy for grieving.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026-Spring-Issue.pdf>

Center for Loss & Life Transition website offers resources, training, articles and activities for people experiencing grief and mourning.

<https://www.centerforloss.com/grief/>

*Gardening Through Grief - A Conversation with Practitioners in the Field* video with Carrie McCann and Eleanor Moriarty Wroath offers therapeutic goals related to gardening, along with program ideas.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-TGhOZWWQM>

Grief organizations listing from *The Compassionate Friends* organization includes 30 national groups, many with a specific mandate and population they work with (SIDS, parents of murdered children, mothers against drunk driving, actively moving forward for 18-30 yr olds).

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/resources/related-organizations/>

*Hospice Foundation of America* organization and its website provide numerous resources on grief and hospice – non final goodbye, improving dying, moving forward after loss, what is grief, and hospice guide.

<https://hospicefoundation.org/hospice-grief-info/>

*National Alliance for Children's Grief* resources online in English and Spanish touch on important topics like supporting children grieving a homicide death, creating engaging and meaningful activities for group grief support.

<https://nacg.org/resource-library/>

*Psychology Today* website has multiple articles on grief, nature as a healing strategy and green burials.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-green-goodbye/202506/the-ecopsychology-of-the-green-burial>

*Remembering a Life* website provides ideas for spending time in nature as a strategy for healing grief.

<https://www.rememberingalife.com/blogs/blog/spending-time-in-nature-can-help-heal-grief>

*Shadowloss: Shedding Light on Our Hidden Grief TEDX Talk* explored grief as the loss of connections, friendships etc. similar to death or loss of a person. Speaker Cole Imperi.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqeKwOz3DMQ>

*The Compassionate Friends* non-profit with 500 chapters offers multiple resources including online virtual chapters (live chats), brochures, and a weekly web-radio series.

<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/resources/>

*The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*. (n.d.). Resources on traumatic grief.

<https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/traumatic-grief>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations including bereaved (activities: [nature artwork](#), [commemorative seed packets](#), [bulb lasagna planting](#), [floral mementos](#), [forget me not flowers/dementia & seed pots](#), [harvesting for a communal meal \(bereaved group\)](#), [holiday herbal wreath](#),.

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

## **Related organizations**

[Actively Moving Forward](#)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

[Bereaved Parents of the USA](#)

[Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#)

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