

CATEGORY: POPULATIONS & PROGRAMS

Senior Care/Dementia Care & Programs

Horticulture activity, programs, gardens, views of plants and access to nature and outdoors can have positive impacts on seniors in all of the health domains. These include social interactions, psychosocial benefits, nutritional benefits, sensory experiences and increased exposure to sunlight (vitamin D) for melatonin production, as well as reduction in agitation. Research validates these, with increasing interest in strategies for specific segments of elder populations including people living with dementia, seniors with physical deficits, those living in seniors' facilities and green care farms.

Research has included recent meta-analysis studies on efficiency of HT/TH with seniors (Alipor et al, 2020; Bae et al, 2021; Whelden & Sawin, 2023). Studies where specific metrics validate effectiveness of plant-based programming are increasing (Ascencio et al, 2019; Chen, 2023). Benefits of access to and the use of gardens for elder populations have been published more frequently (Koura et al, 2023; Ogura et al, 2022; Magnussen et al. 2021; Motealleh et al, 2022; Ng et al, 2022; Scott, 2023). Programs involving gardening seem to be expanding with many at senior living facilities; the benefits now being more widely embraced (refer to program examples below).

Articles published in nursing journals are appearing more regularly, with growing interest from these health care providers for strategies and programming involving horticulture (Huang & Yuan, 2023; Chou et al, 2024; Jueng & Liu, 2023; Lin et al, 2022; Lo et al, 2019).

Newer research on brain health, cognitive function, attitudes on aging, sense of hope and meaning in life's experiences, preventative geriatric medicine, and fall prevention are included in this bibliography where horticulture is playing a role in health.

For related resources refer to category: Populations/Horticulture Programs in Specific Settings – Mental Health; category: Horticultural Therapy & Health Services – all sections; category: Horticulture for Health Overview – Gardening Health Benefits.

Key Organizations

[Administration on Aging](#) (AoA) - an agency of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services

[Alzheimer's Association](#)

[American Horticultural Therapy Association](#)

[Thrive](#)

[Trellis Scotland](#)

Books, journals & epublications on senior/dementia care populations and programs

[American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias](#)

[Alzheimer's Research & Therapies](#)

[BMC Geriatrics](#)

Carman, J. (2021). *Design for generations*. <https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/>

Cassidy, P. (2011). *Gardening for seniors*.

Chalfont, G. (2008). *Dementia green care handbook of therapeutic design and practice*.

Chalfont, G. (2007). *Design for nature in dementia care*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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.

Pollock, A. & Marshall, M. (Eds.) (2012). *Designing outdoor spaces for people living with dementia*. Hammond Press & DSDC.

Research & articles on senior/dementia care populations and programs

Recently published selected research & articles:

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Alzheimer's Association. (2024). [New IDEAS study \(imaging dementia—evidence for amyloid scanning\)](#).

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Chu, H.Y., Chan, H.S., & Chen, M.F. (2021). Effects of horticultural activities on attitudes toward aging, sense of hope and hand-eye coordination in older adults in residential care facilities. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 18(12), 6555.

D'Cunha, N.M., Isbel, S., McKune, A.J. et al. (2020). Activities outside of the care setting for people with dementia: A systematic review. *BMJ Open*, 10(10), e040753.

de Boer, B., Buist, Y., de Bruin, S.R. et al. (2021). Working at green care farms and other innovative small-scale long-term dementia care facilities requires different competencies of care staff. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 18(20), 10747.

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Examples of senior care/dementia care with plant programming

Alzheimer Scotland website explains horticultural and other therapeutic modalities being used with this population, including therapeutic activities, sensory interventions, cognitive stimulation and support services.

<https://www.alzscot.org/living-with-dementia/getting-support/accessing-alzheimer-scotland-support/therapeutic-activity/horticultural-therapies>

Banfield Pavilion with rooftop garden offers long term care for seniors with views of nature, access to outdoors, programs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30lbfm9GoYI>

Eldergrow company offers contracted plant-based services at seniors' facilities indoors with a focus on therapeutic benefits.

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

Jacqueline Fiske Healing Garden in Jupiter, Fl. fosters the physical, mental & spiritual restoration of patients, many seniors, distracting them from the medical setting.

<http://studio-sprout.com/2012/09/jacqueline-fiske-healing-garden/>

San Francisco Campus for Jewish Living's Acute Geriatric Psychiatry Hospital has gardens and horticultural therapy groups in support of active living and quality of life, led by registered horticultural therapist and medical social worker April Ellis. Interview.

<https://www.htinstitute.org/2023-spring-newsletter/>

Sunnyside Health and Rehabilitation Center in Sarasota FL uses an indoor therapeutic horticulture garden, to deliver and support gardening at senior facilities, funded by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration.

<https://www.sarasotamagazine.com/news-and-profiles/2021/07/rehabilitation-center-begins-nature-inspired-therapy-program>

The Back Porch Garden at Medford Leas used by assisted living and skilled nursing residents at this senior's facility allows for concerts, bbqs, classes & special events in the rooftop garden.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/the-back-porch-garden-at-medford-leas/>

The Ruby Pardue Blackburn Adult Day Health Care Center, Wilkesboro, NC has an outdoor memory care garden with walking paths, covered patio, sitting areas and horticultural therapy section designed by Jack Carman, FASLA, Design for Generations.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/the-ruby-pardue-blackburn-adult-day-health-care-center-wilkesboro-nc/>

University of California Cooperative Extension senior gardening program demonstrates how these programs can contribute to healthy lifestyles and habits with CalFresh Healthy Living University of California supporting seniors growing food for selves and others.

<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=39474>

Videos, websites & webinars on senior care/dementia care with plant programming

[AARP hosts virtual and in-person events](#) with a gardening and/or nature events theme.

A Comprehensive Guide on Senior Gardening website from Spring Hills senior living company provides information on all aspects of gardening with this population.

<https://www.springhills.com/resources/senior-gardening>

Addressing Self-Regulation Challenges Using Horticultural Therapy & Therapeutic Horticulture webinar/video from the Florida Horticulture for Health Network discusses this topic, along with applications for senior and dementia populations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M6jHQpymkYA>

Benefits of Horticultural Therapy Techniques for People Living with Dementia online brief by Joan Asseff on behalf of Alzheimer's Texas shares tips.

https://www.txalz.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/benefits_of_horticultural_therapy_for_people_living_with_dementia.pdf?x49751

Plant Programming for Seniors webinar youtube from the Florida Horticulture for Health Network uses a forum with HT practitioners to share ideas for gardening, therapeutic horticulture and gardens.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPtsg3uAfw0>

Rodiek, S. (2009). *Access to nature for older adults* [3 DVDs – 93 minutes]. Center for Health Systems & Design.

Societe Alzheimer Society Nova Scotia fact sheet on dementia & African Nova Scotians identifies prevalence, risk factors & services available.

<https://alzheimer.ca/ns/sites/ns/files/documents/2023%20HAAC%20Rack%20Card%20Updated.pdf>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations including seniors and people living with dementia (activities like blueberry activities, care of houseplants, celery shenanigans, choose one: rose or daisy, community gardening with dementia populations).

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/senior-and-dementia/>

Trellis Scotland has online plant activities appropriate for many populations including indoor flowering bulbs and printing using natural materials.

<https://www.trellisscotland.org.uk/content/live-zoom-sessions>

Related organizations

Horticultural Therapy Associations

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