

**CATEGORY: LANDSCAPES FOR HEALTH: DESIGNED LANDSCAPES**

## Therapeutic Gardens

“A therapeutic garden is designed for use as a component of a treatment, rehabilitation, or vocational program. A garden can be described as being therapeutic in nature when it has been designed to meet the needs of a specific user or population. It is designed to accommodate participant’s goals and to facilitate people-plant interactions.” (AHTA, 2021). Contemplative landscapes is a newer term that recognizes attributes that contribute to improved mood, emotional regulation, etc. (Olsweki et al., 2022). This study provided neuro-psychophysiological evidence of benefits from passive exposure to a therapeutic garden for the mental health of individuals with clinically concerning depressive disorders.

The literature includes population specific therapeutic gardens for cancer patients, youth, veterans and other populations. Therapeutic gardens may include horticultural therapy gardens, vocational rehabilitation farms, physical therapy garden, and reflexology paths. Recent publications written by geographers provide perspectives from this discipline, illustrating the scope of interest (Marsh & Williams, 2023). Research has included health benefits of therapeutic gardens including hospital-based herb and vegetable garden for health care workers (Carroll et al., 2023), evidence-based design guidelines for therapeutic gardens tailored to elderly populations synthesizing reminiscence and preference studies (Herod et al., 2024), therapeutic garden design for community horticulture based on sensory experience needs and the use of hospital green spaces and landscape as sensory-therapeutic gardens (Jin et al., 2023; Dinu Roman Szabo et al., 2023), and play areas as therapeutic spaces (Czalczyńska-Podolska, 2024).

Books and research focused on design elements of therapeutic gardens have surged since 2024 (Paraskevopoulou & Kamperi, 2025; Marques & McIntosh, 2025; Winterbottom & Wagenfeld, 2025; Azim et al., 2025; Beh et al., 2025; Ferrentino et al., 2024; Huang, X., Malek & Salleh, 2025) among others.

### Key Organizations

[American Horticultural Therapy Association](#)

[American Society of Landscape Architects \(ASLA\) Professional Practice Networks](#) with forums for a variety of topics/focus

### Books, journals & epublications on therapeutic gardens

Ajibade, A.T. (2020). *Integrating the natural healing process for post-traumatic stress disorder treatment in veterans through a healing garden*. West Virginia University.

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

Chongxian, C., & Winterbottom, D. (Eds.), *Theory of healthy landscape design*. China Construction Industry Press.

Jeffries, S. (2023). *Designing, planting and using a therapeutic garden*. The Crowood Press.

Marcus, CC., & Sachs, N. (2013). *Therapeutic landscapes: An evidence-based approach to designing healing gardens and restorative outdoor spaces*. Wiley.

Marcus, CC., & Shepley, MM. (2025). *Environmental psychology and human well-being*. Academic Press.

Marsh & Williams (Eds.). (2023). *Cultivated therapeutic landscapes*. Routledge.

Marques, B., & McIntosh, J. (Eds.). (2025). *Designing therapeutic environments: Social and cultural practice for health and well-being*. Taylor & Francis.

National Parks. (2017). [Design guidelines for therapeutic gardens in Singapore](#).

Winterbottom, D., & Wagenfeld, A. (2025). *Therapeutic gardens: Design for healing spaces*. Timber Press.

## Research & articles on therapeutic gardens

Recently published selected research & articles:

Allahyar, M., & Kazemi, F. (2021). [Landscape preferences of a children's hospital by children and therapists](#). *Urban Forestry & Greening*, 58.

American Horticultural Therapy Association. (2021). [Positions and definitions](#).

Ameli, R., Skeath, P., Abraham, P.A. et al. (2021). A nature-based health intervention at a military healthcare center randomized, controlled, cross-over study. *Peer Journal*, 9.

Anas, MM. (2023, December). Therapeutic gardens, its effect in the treatment of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In *Aip conference proceedings* (Vol. 2977, No. 1). AIP Publishing.

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Beh, JH., Yew, MK., Tan, KH., & Rayner, JP. (2025). Critical therapeutic landscape design elements for cognitive impairments in the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre. *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, 19(3).

Bell, SL., Foley, R., Houghton, F. et al. (2018). From therapeutic landscapes to healthy spaces, places and practices: A scoping review. *Soc Sci Med.*, 196.

Bumgarner, N., & Chance, LG. (2021). The role of public gardens in human well-being. *ISHS Acta Horticulturae 1330: XV International People Plant Symposium and II International Symposium on Horticultural Therapies: The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-being and Social Development*.

Burt, V. (2021). Healing gardens as transformational spaces. *ISHS Acta Horticulturae 1330: XV International People Plant Symposium and II International Symposium on Horticultural Therapies: The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-being and Social Development*.

Cardoso Arevalo, KJ., Rebecchi, A., Botta, M. et al. (2023). Bridging therapeutic landscapes to architecture. International experience-based design strategies for healthcare infrastructures. *Acta Biomedica*, 94(S3).

Carroll, C., McCray, S., & Utter, J. (2023). Acceptability and feasibility of a hospital-based herb and vegetable garden for health care workers. *J Nutr Educ Behav.*, 55(12).

Carroll, C., Higgs, J., McCray, S., & Utter, J. (2023). Implementation and impact of health care gardens: A systematic scoping review. *J Integr Complement Med*.

Cordoza, M., Ulrich, RS., Manulik, BJ. et al. (2018). Impact of nurses taking daily work breaks in a hospital garden on burnout. *American Journal Critical Care*, 27(6).

Czalczyńska-Podolska, M. (2024). Therapeutic playground: Typology of solutions and analysis of selected public playgrounds as places with therapeutic potential. *Sustainability (2071-1050)*, 16(15).

Davis, BE. (2011). Rooftop hospital gardens for physical therapy: A post-occupancy evaluation. *HERD: Health Environments Research & Design Journal*, 4(3).

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- De Vrieze, E., De Schrijver, A., Schelfhout, S. et al. (2025). Boosting biodiversity potential in gardens of healthcare institutions: Turning lawns into flowering meadows. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 128848.
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- Diehl, E. (Advisor, 2017). Design guidelines for therapeutic gardens in Singapore. *National Parks Board: Singapore*.
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- Dinu Roman Szabo, M., Dumitras, A., Mircea, DM. et al. (2023). Touch, feel, heal. The use of hospital green spaces and landscape as sensory-therapeutic gardens: A case study in a university clinic. *Front Psychol.*, 24(14).
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### **Examples of therapeutic gardens**

Anarchy Zone at the Ithaca Children's Garden.

<https://www.ithacachildrengarden.org/visit-the-garden/about-the-garden/hands-on-nature-anarchy-zone/>

Anne and Robert Lurie Children's Hospital Crown Sky Garden in Chicago, IL.

<https://www.luriechildrens.org/en/patients-visitors/visiting-lurie-childrens/tour-the-hospital/family-community-destinations/crown-sky-garden/>

Baltimore Washington Medical Center's Healing Garden in Glen Burnie MD is viewed from the infusion area.

<https://www.umms.org/bwmc/giving/support-a-cause/support-cancer-care-at-um-bwmc/healing-garden>

Banner Gateway Medical Center, Phoenix AR women's garden is designed for community healing.

[https://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/hospitals-gardens-help-the-healing/article\\_d7a7927a-8ae2-5a43-afc9-918f9e7a2d5f.html](https://www.eastvalleytribune.com/news/hospitals-gardens-help-the-healing/article_d7a7927a-8ae2-5a43-afc9-918f9e7a2d5f.html)

Bethlem Royal Hospital Occupational Therapy Garden UK, originally with a walled kitchen garden, gained use by occupational therapists for patients with a range of health challenges.

<https://nhsforest.org/resources/bethlem-royal-hospital-occupational-therapy-garden/>

Earl Lee Evans Sensory and Community Garden at Firefly Autism in Denver CO focuses on supporting emotional regulation skills, reducing stress for visitors and caregivers.

<https://dug.org/gardens-food-forests/initiatives/therapeutic-gardens/>

FrontLine Gardens 501c3 organization provides raised or elevated garden beds at personal residences and a custom therapeutic gardening program in partnership with a vet center or law enforcement trauma therapist for those injured in the line of duty or Veterans and law enforcement officers suffering from PTSD.

<https://frontlinegardens.org/>

Healing Garden at Houston Methodist Hospital's Centennial Tower features a 14<sup>th</sup> floor outdoor rooftop healing garden for rehabilitative and therapeutic healing, based on evidence-based design principles.

<https://chn.tamu.edu/center-initiatives.html>

Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital uses its large greenhouse for therapeutic and community outreach programs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvDhD6JFoUs>

Land Together Program uses innovative programming in vocational gardening and landscaping skills training for people in prison to reconnect with self, community, and the natural world.

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

*Legacy Emanuel Children's Garden*, Portland Oregon is a 9,000 sq. ft garden for pediatric patients and families with play areas, quiet spaces and is used for therapeutic programming.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/galleries/BPFCLZZMSVE2VHILYN3OOXJ2GE/>

*Legacy Health's* research on Health Workforce Well-being to Optimize the Work Environment with funding from HRSA involves their therapeutic gardens.

[https://physicianwellness.ucsd.edu/\\_files/knowledge-hub-files/Funding%20Research%20JAMA%202023%20jama\\_melnick\\_2023\\_vp\\_230014\\_1677095690.81075.pdf](https://physicianwellness.ucsd.edu/_files/knowledge-hub-files/Funding%20Research%20JAMA%202023%20jama_melnick_2023_vp_230014_1677095690.81075.pdf)

*Lifestyle Garden and Track* at University of Florida near Shands Medical Plaza and Davis Cancer Pavilion was built for a research project by the Institute of Aging to examine effects of exercise on cognitive function of elderly adults, with a 60-meter track with joint friendly materials.

<https://wilmotgardens.med.ufl.edu/about/enhancement-projects/>

*Living Earth Center's Veterans Garden* in Minnesota, is a community space open to all, initiated as a therapeutic green space for Veterans to learn, socialize, with an emphasis on growing food.

<https://centerofagriculture.org/veterans/>

*Mary's Woods Garden* seniors' facility in Portland OR., in partnership with Legacy Health received AHTA Therapeutic Garden Award in 2023.

<https://maryswoods.org/healing-garden-design-award/>

*McMaster Children's Hospital* Canada has an outdoor play courtyard on its accessible third floor, with interactive spaces, toys for use by patients and siblings.

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

*Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Veterans Therapy Garden* addresses health challenges of former military service members, providing a garden space and therapeutic horticulture services.

<https://givingto.msu.edu/causes-to-support/crowdpower/veterans-therapy-garden>

*North Cotswold Hospital, UK* offers a physiotherapy focused garden with raised benches, steps, and a variety of walking surfaces used by occupational therapists for rehabilitation of patients.

<https://nhsforest.org/green-your-site/therapeutic-gardens/>

*Olsen Family Garden, St. Lois Children's Hospital, Missouri* - the 18<sup>th</sup> floor garden in the hospital is used for therapeutic and restorative purposes.

[http://www.virtually-anywhere.net/tours/stlouis/main/vtour/index.html?startscene=scene\\_Olson\\_Family\\_Garden](http://www.virtually-anywhere.net/tours/stlouis/main/vtour/index.html?startscene=scene_Olson_Family_Garden)

*Oregon State Hospital* mental health facility uses a greenhouse as part of its therapeutic vocational program for patients.

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/OSH/FRIENDS/Pages/360-photos/JC-TX-160-Greenhouse.aspx>

*Palo Alta VA Medical Center's* 800 bed facility addresses polytrauma patients undergoing rehabilitation in its gardens which were specifically designed using evidence-based guidelines.

<http://www.meiarchitects.com/projects/va-palo-alto-healing-garden/>

Randall Children's Hospital Legacy Emanuel level 1 trauma research garden serves patients, family and staff needs using evidence-based design.

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

Regional Rehabilitation Centre, Hamilton Ontario was built with a therapy track, with distance markers, handrails, steps to be used in the rehabilitation process.

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

Rest-Stop-Ranch, Massachusetts is a 4-acre accessible garden specifically designed for long-term caregivers and care-receivers as a therapeutic and inclusive space with ADA-compliant paths, sensory gardens, special events and flower festivals. Open by appointment or during events.

<https://rest-stop-ranch.org/>

Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre, Hamilton Ontario is a multilevel playground designed to include graduated challenges that can be incorporated into therapy, and developmental rehabilitation. Behind it is a therapy track for patients to practice mobility, prosthetics and orthotics on multiple surfaces.

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

Stedman Community Hospice in Brantford Ont. installed an outdoor labyrinth available to hospice patients, families and the larger community. This includes Six Nations Indigenous community and Indigenous plants and signage.

<https://www.sjlc.ca/stedman-community-hospice-1>

The Green Road project for military members uses therapeutic space for healing, incorporating research, self-guided strategies and connections to nature.

<https://vimeo.com/257400358>

University of Florida Health Shands Children's Healing Garden, Gainesville, FL uses a nature explore concept with play, learning spaces and access to nature with raised garden beds, interactive areas and wheeled toy area for use by inpatient children and families.

<https://ufhealth.org/locations/uf-health-shands-childrens-hospital/patients-and-families/uf-health-childrens-healing-garden>

Victoria Hospital's Indigenous Healing Garden, part of London Health Sciences Center, Ont. Canada, with a medicine wheel, the sacred medicines, in an outdoor space, is part of the facility's Indigenous Healing Space intended to advance reconciliation through inclusive care.

<https://www.lhsc.on.ca/news/embracing-traditional-medicines-through-lhscs-indigenous-healing-garden>

Virtua Camden Hospital Meditation Garden was designed for therapeutic programs for children with horticultural therapy, meditation and therapeutic garden, integrated into health care services at this healthcare setting.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/virtua-camden-hospital/>

Warrior and Family Support Center and Freedom Park in San Antonio TX for prosthetic and traumatic brain injury patients is built as a refuge; many return to this health facility and benefit from its active use garden, therapy garden, freedom parkway, outdoor kitchen, purple heart garden, and play space.

<https://sanantonio.uso.org/san-antonio-warriorcenter>

Therapy Garden at Merwick was developed for use by physical, occupational, speech and horticultural therapists, with walking paths, therapy care, raised planters and other accessible features.

<https://designforgenerations.com/case-studies/therapy-garden-at-merwick/>

### **Videos, webinars & websites on therapeutic gardens**

*Healthcare facilities: Healing gardens in healthcare* webinar hosted by Boston Society of Architects/AIA (2021) has 3 experts talking about gardens at Brigham Young Hospital, Spaulding Rehab Hospital, and Boston Medical roof garden.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vJID\\_tW5W8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vJID_tW5W8)

Legacy Therapy Garden in Portland Oregon.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6fR9rOJCoA>

[www.legacyhealth.org/gardens](http://www.legacyhealth.org/gardens)

Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska: Patients partake in gardening activities as part of their healing process.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffAclfou2GU>

*National Park Board of Singapore Therapeutic Gardens*: In this edition of *NParks*, therapeutic gardens are presented as woven into Singapore green outdoor gardens, and scientifically designed to meet physical, psychological and social needs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYu4la7WZLI>

*Sensory plants for therapeutic gardens*. Webinar by Susan Morgan on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2fSqLVuZq8>

*The Therapeutic Garden – 10 Elements for a Therapeutic Garden Design* video from Celtic Farm describes attributes for supporting mental well-being, stress reduction.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwLGMWD7wgl>

*The Healing Gardens at Siskin Hospital* at Siskin Hospital for Physical Rehabilitation, Chattanooga, TN.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIValLgiz58&t=263s>

Therapeutic horticulture in North Carolina lists several types of gardens including therapeutic, healing, restorative gardens.

<https://therapeutic-hort.ces.ncsu.edu/nc-therapeutic-hort-programs/>

*Veterans Therapeutic Garden* at Raymond G. Murphy Medical Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico includes allied health professionals and their services with a focus on challenges faced by veterans.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pbt91HH-eTs>

*Wilmot Botanical Gardens* is an oasis on UF's campus. Situated in the bustling health science center portion of campus, the garden and its greenhouse serve as a respite for patients and their caregivers at UF Health, as does the newer B.J. and Eve Wilder Therapeutic Garden.

<https://wilmotgardens.med.ufl.edu/>

<https://wilmotgardens.med.ufl.edu/2025/12/18/from-the-directors-desk-thoughts-of-a-weed-puller-3/>

### **Related organizations**

Organizations that are population specific (i.e. *American Cancer Society*,  
*Alzheimer's Associations*)

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