

Florida Horticulture for Health Network – Resource Hub

CATEGORY: POPULATIONS/HORTICULTURE PROGRAMS

Trauma Recovery & Plant-based Programs

Trauma is experienced by individuals and as collective communities and populations spanning a wide range of areas, types of trauma and with complex physical, emotional and cognitive health challenges. These include for example, post-traumatic stress for veterans, women veterans, military sexual trauma, and PTSD, among ethnic minority veterans, psychological trauma for American Indians, Native Hawaiians and Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in Vietnam, and peacekeepers. Trauma can be experienced by people impacted by disaster, weather and climate extremes, and mass violence events, along with terrorist attacks, intimate partner violence, child abuse (sexual, physical), and human trafficking.

Trauma, defined by physician Gábor Maté is “a psychic injury, lodged in [the] nervous system, mind, and body, lasting long past the originating incident(s), triggerable at any moment... trauma is what happens inside the individual not what happens to the individual” (Mate & Mate, 2022). This excerpt from Polacova et al. (2023) paper touches on related and important elements of trauma—trauma-informed care (TIC), core principles of TIC, and health interventions including horticultural therapy, therapeutic horticulture, and nature-based therapies. The literature on trauma identifies resiliency as a significant aspect of addressing trauma of all kinds, which is the capacity to make adaptations that result in positive outcomes in spite of serious experiences or adverse circumstances. Factors that support resiliency include supportive community, feeling of belonging, sense of worth, and caring adults (for children) (Vawnet.org, 2021).

For related resources refer to category: Populations/Horticulture Programs in Specific Settings – Eating Disorders, Veterans, etc.; category: Horticultural Therapy & Health Services.

Key Organizations

[Alliance to End Trafficking \(ATEST\)](#)

[American Trauma Society](#)

[Freedom from Torture - Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture](#)

[National Center for Trauma-informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#)

[National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health](#)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

[The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons \(ICAT\)](#)

[Wounded Warriors in Action](#)

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: PTSD: National Center for PTSD](#)

Books, journals & epublications on trauma recovery & plant-based programs

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

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.; DSM-5-TR). American Psychiatric Publishing.

Coverdale, J.H., Gordon, M.R., & Nguyen, P.T. (2020). *Human trafficking - A treatment guide for mental health professionals*. American Psychiatric Association Publishing.

- Datsiuk, I., & Senyk, O. (2025). *Testing the efficacy of horticultural therapy in conditions of continuous war-related stress: Comparison of the randomized and pretest-posttest experimental designs*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Fisher, J. (2021). *Transforming the living legacy of trauma: A workbook for survivors and therapists*. PESI Publishing & Media.
- Grut, J., & Linden, S. (2002). *The healing fields: Working with psychotherapy and nature to rebuild shattered lives*. Franklin Lincoln.
- Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery (Triphasic Model)*. Basic.
- [Journal of Trauma Nursing](#)
- [Journal of Traumatic Stress](#)
- [Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy](#) (journal)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *Trauma informed care in behavioral health services. Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) Series 57*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4801., 63.
- [Trauma Care](#) (journal)
- Wise, J. (2015). *Digging for victory- horticultural therapy with veterans for post-traumatic growth*. Routledge.

Research & articles on trauma recovery & plant-based programs

Recently published selected research & articles:

- Adams, S., Houston-Kolnik, J., & Reichert, J. (2017). [Trauma-informed and evidence-based practices and programs to address trauma in correctional settings](#). *Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority*.
- Ades, V., Wu, SX., Rabinowitz, E. et al. (2019 April). An integrated, trauma-informed care model for female survivors of sexual violence: The Engage, Motivate, Protect, Organize, Self-Worth, Educate, Respect (EMPOWER) Clinic. *Obstet Gynecol.*, 133(4).
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- Chaudhury P., & Banerjee, D. (2020). Recovering with nature: A review of ecotherapy and implications for the COVID-19 pandemic. *Front Public Health.*, 8.
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- Dieterich-Hartwell, R., Brodovsky, J., DeAlba, K., et al. (2025). An integrative, holistic treatment approach for veterans with chronic traumatic brain injury and associated comorbidities: Case report. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16.
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- Duquesne University. (2020). [What are the 6 principles of trauma-informed care?](#)
- Faqiha, ANN., & Djauhari, SC. (2025). Implementation of horticultural therapy of enhance resilience children victims of violence in Pusat Pelayanan Sosial Bina Remaja Makkareso Maros. *Global Sustainability and Community Engagement*, 1(3).
- Fleming, L., & Creus, E. (2024). Therapeutic techniques applicable to people-plant programming. *Cultivate*, 4(3).
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Examples of trauma recovery & plant-based programs

Barदारash Community Garden, Kurdistan is located at the SEED Foundation Trauma Center in the refugee camp, with the mission of helping people heal from trauma, cope with displacement, rebuild a future, and use gardening as part of psychosocial and mental health services.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/community-gardens/>

Blair's Sanctuary Garden (Orting, WA) was established for women veterans including those with military sexual trauma (MST), to grow organic healthy food for food insecure people while coping with trauma and the transition to civilian life.

<https://www.dvnf.org/blairs-sanctuary-garden-helps-women-veterans-heal/>

Blossom Program UK is a nature-based 10-week support program for people who have experienced domestic abuse with campfire gathering area, kitchen area, foraging items, mandalas, with outcomes of social connections, well-being & self-esteem, reduced depression symptoms.

<https://wildernessfoundation.org.uk/domestic-violence-recovery/>

Building a Personal Connection with Nature program for female survivors of human trafficking is delivered by A Safe Place community agency, North Carolina Master Gardeners and the NHC Arboretum In North Carolina with goals of helping women feel safe in a public space, in this case, a public garden, and to foster a sense of resiliency through nature-based activities.

<https://nhc.gov.com/161/Arboretum-NC-Cooperative-Extension>

Cornerstones of Care, Kansas City, MO provides residential inpatient treatment and a therapeutic school for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges due to childhood trauma, with plant-based programs.

<https://kccg.org/two-schools-two-gardens-immeasurable-success-for-at-risk-kids/>

Freedom from Torture in the UK offers horticultural therapy and gardening in support of people who have experienced torture and trauma.

<https://sussexbylines.co.uk/community/some-of-the-trees-have-scars-on-them/>

Grounding Project, an NHS horticultural therapy program for refugees and asylum seekers living in Kennington, South London area fosters healing from trauma using a Calming Garden. Part of non-profit *Roots and Shoots* educational and environmental charity.

<https://www.rootsandshoots.org.uk/environmental-projects/the-grounding-project>

Healing Garden at Chamchamal, Iraq run by the Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights provides care for Yazidi & other traumatized individuals, with an international team of HTs providing training to psychotherapists to become registered in HT in the German model.

<https://jiyan.org/healinggarden/>

Mensajeros de la Paz Spanish non-profit in Lima, Peru runs programs including therapeutic horticulture, promoting resilience in children impacted by poverty, domestic violence & other early childhood traumas.

<https://mensajerosdelapaz.com/>

Mission Connection in California offers several therapeutic interventions for trauma recovery including horticultural therapy and nature therapy.

<https://missionconnectionhealthcare.com/mental-health/horticultural-therapy/trauma-recovery/>

Palo Alto 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/>

Refugee Trauma and Resilience Center at Boston Children's Hospital offers resources for promoting healthy adjustment of refugee children and adolescents who have resettled in the US including research, programs, partnerships in the community and plant-based programming.

<https://www.childrenshospital.org/programs/trauma-and-community-resilience-center>

Roots of Recovery program at Idaho Botanical Garden delivers horticultural therapy for individuals recovering from or navigating trauma.

<https://www.idahobotanicalgarden.org/horticulture-therapy/>

The GreenHouse Program at Rikers Island Correctional Facility NY, in conjunction with the Horticultural Society of NY, uses a restorative garden environment & HT programming working with incarcerated individuals who have experienced trauma & other health challenges.

<https://healinglandscapes.org/pdf-library/jiler.pdf>

Sanctuary Farm in Philadelphia addresses health inequities from systemic racial oppression and economic injustice by transforming neglected space into urban green spaces; a therapeutic horticulture program for veterans is also offered.

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

Seraaj Family Homes, Inc. in Waugh Alabama partners with *The Grandma Home House Retreat* providing a therapeutic sanctuary to foster interaction & wellness for foster & adopted children and their families.

<https://seraajfh.com/using-horticulture-as-a-method-of-healing-from-trauma/>

Socially aware gardens at Jerusalem Botanical Gardens use their public garden as part of social programming, including [Plants Grow People](#), with its rehabilitation focus for holocaust survivors, war veterans and immigrants.

The Petria's Place Healing Garden, at the UCAN campus in Chicago, a social service and youth development agency residential youth center addresses unstable living situations, emotional distress or trauma by providing therapeutic support; services include therapeutic horticulture.

<https://blockclubchicago.org/2021/09/23/west-side-garden-is-designed-to-help-youth-heal-from-trauma-a-garden-is-a-friend-you-can-visit-anytime/>

University of California Irvine (UCI) CARE Therapeutic Horticulture Program workshop *People & Plant Care*, was a pilot session for UCI CARE for those who identified as survivors of violence and who were seeking tools for personal growth and restoration.

<https://care.uci.edu/services/holistic-healing.html>

University of Kentucky Center for Research on Violence Against Women (CRVAW), with funding from Dept. of Justice are studying the benefits of therapeutic horticulture at Greenhouse 17, Central Kentucky's women's shelter.

<https://scholars.uky.edu/en/organisations/center-for-research-on-violence-against-women/>

Vogel Alcove childcare center in Dallas Tx works with children affected by homelessness including related traumatic experiences in The Backyard garden onsite.

<https://vogelalcove.org/>

Videos, websites & webinars on trauma recovery & plant-based programs

The Blossom Programme: Nature-based Therapy for Survivors of Domestic Abuse.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWDXLAluMSM&t=2s>

Course PTSD Overview and Treatment from U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs.

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand_tx/index.asp

Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD) services incorporate HT for trauma treatment; HT practitioner Carol LaRocque narrates [youTube] video on their HT program.

<https://www.htinstitute.org/blog/horticultural-therapy-connects-with-youth-at-the-mental-health-center-of-denver/>

[National Center for Trauma-informed Care](#) website and organization provides information and resources on trauma, as part of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/resource/samhsas-national-center-for-trauma-informed-care/>

ILGA Database - *Mental Health and Human Rights Info* from Freedom from Torture – Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture lists resources on this topic.

THAD (*Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database*) offers TH activities across populations and settings including people with mental health challenges and trauma (activities: [exploring sense of safety](#), [things I love tree](#), [teacup planting](#), [plant spacing and boundaries](#), [exploring renewal & personal growth](#), [beach flowers & resiliency](#), [balancing stones – creating rock towers](#)).
<https://hos.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/>

Types of Trauma website resources from U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs
<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/index.asp>

Vawnet. (2021). Research on resiliency. *National Resource Center on Domestic Violence* has digital resources focused on resiliency.
<https://vawnet.org/sc/research-resilience>

Related organizations

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