# CULTIVATE

## FLORIDA HORTICULTURE FOR HEALTH NETWORK

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The Florida Horticulture for Health Network's vision: To promote activities and connect organizations to each other and resources that use horticulture to improve health including: therapeutic horticulture and horticultural therapy, landscapes for health, nature, emerging professional support, allied horticulture and health services, community and school gardens, and food action initiatives.

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# Gardening's Social Side

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR Photos by Common Roots Bi Hi Urban Farm, L. Fleming & J. Muniz.Unsplash

Research has validated the role positive social interactions play in health, both psychologically and sociologically (Levasseur et al., 2010; Leavell et al., 2019). The health benefits of social interactions where horticulture, gardens and gardening are involved are not as well-known as the physical health benefits of gardening.

Gardening's social side—the health benefits of social interactions—is important to understand and integrate into people-plant programming because it can impact a wide range of benefits for individuals, groups, and communities.

What types of social interactions related to horticultural activities provide health benefits? Many would identify sense of community from participation in urban farms, community or school gardens. Membership and affiliation in plant societies are also a form of social engagement, with participation in plant sales, community beautification projects, and attendance at educational workshops. Social interactions related to food security include advocacy, education, and food production, these often undertaken as collective action seeking to improve food access and nutrition.

Groups or movements using horticulture as the catalyst for social interactions have two distinct types of interactions, identified as apolitical or political (Fleming, 2021).

Garden clubs, master gardener programs, horticulture and plant societies, and even horticulture industry trade groups are examples of apolitical organizations where a focus on hands-on gardening, community service, expansion of gardening knowledge, and networking, create a sense of community where social interaction is significant. But there are other health benefits correlated to social interactions in apolitical groups:

- cognitive/intellectual improvements where transfer of horticultural knowledge is the conduit of social interactions (Boyer et al., 2002; Hall & Knuth, 2019);
- continuance of cultural values, traditions and sociological connections passed through one on one interactions, group & community festivals & celebrations (Companion, 2016);
- opportunities for affiliation and social engagement through professional membership associations (Dicke & Saitgalina, 2014).

Horticultural activity as a catalyst for social engagement sheds light on the breadth and variety within apolitical groups:

- Gainesville FL. master gardeners interacting with veterans, staff & other volunteers at the Honor Center (military) Garden re garden design, fundraising and ongoing program delivery;
- garden club members' volunteering & acting as docents transferring horticulture information at Ringling Museum's Secret Garden & other community gardens;
- <u>university students connecting</u> through gardening, gardening labs, and food production activities;
- organizations like Children and Nature Network creating an affiliation between individuals and groups seeking to promote access to nature.

Groups identified as having a political/social change element, and where horticulture is the driver of social interactions, are primarily tied to food security. These include food alliances, food literacy non-profits, and community gardens (see below for more info on community gardens). "The interplay between gardening activities, small scale food production, and social affiliation makes this subset unique, as does its role as a lightning rod



for current societal thought and action" (Fleming, 2022). Like apolitical groups, there are a variety of health benefits correlated to social interactions in political groups:

- strengthening communities through improved food access and economies of scale, with shared values & collective action improving food security (Alaimo et al., 2016);
- expanding interactions and partnerships within communities (between local government, food agencies, community gardens etc.) (Bice et al., 2018);
- collective action re policy reform and advocacy for food action and improved food systems (Eisenmann et al., 2011);
- group initiatives integrating social and ecological activities (related to sustainable agriculture practices, community re-structuring & food security) (Egerer et al., 2020);
- establishing connections between food producers & consumers (Dimitri et al., 2016).

Models of horticulture-focused organizations with political/social change missions rely on social interactions, these critical to their existence:

- <u>Civil Eats</u>, Foodtank and other digital communication platforms disseminating & sharing information related to horticulture strategies addressing food security;
- <u>Detroit's Agrihood</u> transforming communities, improving neighborhoods physically & sociologically by bringing people together to interact & garden;
- <u>urban farms across North America</u> functioning as physical gathering space & inclusive locations to grow food, share plant knowledge & materials among community participants;
- <u>HEAL food alliances</u> connecting people, to improve food access through purchasing power & food distribution;
- DC UrbanGreens nonprofit active in food desert neighborhoods, educating, transferring knowledge, meal distribution with individuals and groups;
- Cleveland Crops offering agricultural and culinary training to adults with disabilities.

Community gardens and urban farms straddle Fleming's apolitical and political categorization. Individuals and groups involved in community gardens determine the type of social engagement they want to participate in, with some affiliating for political/social change reasons, others not. Nettle's book *Community Gardening as Social Action* suggests that these have become sites for local activism, improvement in urban environments, fostering community engagement and creating community solidarity, each of these using collective social action (2014).



Social engagement that occurs at community gardens offer health benefits in several health domains including the social domain:

- promoting and supporting production of vegetables which in turn positively impact diet, physical activity, and community public health, (i.e. collectively growing & donating produce to local food banks) (Hanson, 2012; Lovell et al., 2014);
- positive experiences, social cohesion and inclusion for marginalized, refugee & immigrant populations at community gardens & urban farms (Heilmayer et al., 2020; Mmako et al., 2019);
- building cross-cultural community connections (Mejia et al., 2020);
- integrating marginalized populations like people living with dementia who can participate in community gardens (Noone & Jenkins, 2018);
- fostering community understanding and resiliency (Okvat & Zauta, 2011; Teig et al., 2009);
- building social capital (Portinga, 2012);
- positive aging benefits especially for older adults with related health attributes of self-esteem, productive endeavours, social engagement and social inclusion (Scott et al., 2020; Soga et al., 2017)

Professionals delivering people-plant programs through horticultural or recreation therapy, afterschool or school garden programs understand the benefits of their plant-based activities within physical, nutritional, and even emotional health domains. Increasingly, recognition of the importance, and the role social interactions play in health is expanding across disciplines. Horticulture-focused programs and services, gardening activity and horticulture organizations like the ones mentioned here are no exception. Many provide opportunities to engage, to foster and become part of a community, and to act collectively for the betterment of themselves and their communities. Fostering horticultural activities that can play a role in positive social interactions is and can be a significant contributor to health.

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Lesley Fleming, HTR examined this topic as part of her Horticulture for Health Framework article (2022), as research for the Florida Horticulture for Health Network's Resource Hub, and as a component of the two horticulture for health networks she established in Nova Scotia and Florida. This article is being published concurrently in epubs Digging In and Cultivate.

# Program Delivery at a Therapeutic Horticulture Program for Women Recovering from Drug Addiction

Text & photos by Silvia Yoshimizu-Yee, MPA

A ten month therapeutic horticulture pilot program focused on women recovering from drug addiction was delivered by a horticultural therapy practitioner at a Los Angeles-based non-profit. The program, aptly named Garden Therapy, occurred during COVID-19.

Participants were groups of women many of whom were dual-diagnosed with PTSD, mood, and/or eating disorders. They were diverse ethnically, socioeconomically and in their sexual-orientation. They received housing, on-site rehabilitation, and were required to stay a minimum of 30-180 days at the facility.

Theories of resilience, use of self, and strength-based approaches as well as cultural competence informed the program (Wichrowski, 2007). Every session included nature-related education paired with an art or garden maintenance activity. The program aimed to improve mood, resilience and adaptation skills in a safe, nonjudgemental and compassionate environment.

The delivery of the therapeutic horticulture program relied on several key techniques:



- Program alignment The practitioner aligned her program with the organization's trauma-informed approach to care, with its six core principles: safety, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, humility and responsiveness. Integrating these principles helped guide interactions between horticultural therapy practitioner, staff and participants while offering a familiar language.
- Setting expectations Each class began by setting expectations including boundaries, instructions about the activity, and class protocols. These expectations provided a safe teaching/learning environment.
- Awareness of possible triggers An awareness of participants' disorders and related triggers to be avoided developed over time. A lesson involving seed counting, for example, triggered memories of counting pills or cutting drugs.
- The use of multiple instructional techniques Due to the various learning and physical abilities, verbal and visual cues including hand gestures were employed and, in some instances, hand-over-hand assistance was provided.
- Being prepared with Plan A, B, and C The ability to modify or have alternative activities for those unable or unwilling to engage in the day's session was crucial. Watering – a reliable and effective activity – calmed agitated participants. Reading nature-related publications in a quiet, comfortable setting was a conciliative option. These activities met the clients where they were while keeping them engaged.

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- Identifying and appointing helpers, doers and mediators – The flow of sessions was facilitated by identifying roles participants chose. Providing these roles as leadership opportunities, some helped as assistants, others who took satisfaction in busy or laborious work became the doers, and mediators kept group relations smooth. Using participant's cooperation, influence and understanding of the group's dynamics fulfilled several functions.
- Documentation Taking written or photographic notes (with facility permission) during or immediately after class when names and observations were fresh, helped evaluate and refine activities, ultimately making for more effective programming. If ever needed as documentation they were available.
- Relationship development Developing relationships with staff and participants proved instrumental to providing sound program delivery. The facilitator depended on maintenance staff, the resident chef, the clinicians, her immediate supervisor and the Executive Director for support.

Planning is critical to program delivery and effective delivery requires all elements to work cohesively. For this therapeutic horticulture program, its successes were attributed to careful planning and thoughtful reflection.

Wichrowski, M. J. (2006). Skills and Theories to Inform Horticultural Therapy Practice. Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture, 17.



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## Marie Selby Botanical Gardens' Expansion

Adapted from communication by Jennifer Rominiecki, President & CEO Photo by L. Fleming

Construction on Phase One of the <u>Master Plan</u> for our Downtown Sarasota campus is proceeding at a rapid pace—with completion scheduled for July 2023. Check out <u>this video of the project underway.</u>

Phase One consists of:

- a new Welcome Center;
- a state-of-the-art Plant Research Center with a new Herbarium, Laboratory, and Library;
- the Living Energy Access Facility (LEAF), which will house parking, a new gift shop, a gardento-plate restaurant, and a nearly 50,000-square-foot solar array;
- a cutting-edge stormwater management system;
- new garden features and more open green space;
- a publicly accessible multi-use recreational trail;
- and off-site roadway improvements.

Selby's scientific collections will be moved out of flood zones and into resilient structures while providing the amenities and capacity necessary to properly welcome and engage visitors. In addition, the latest green building technology will be showcased—resulting in Selby Gardens becoming the first net-positive energy botanical garden complex in the world!

Selby has now raised more than \$53 million for the overall three-phase project goal of \$92 million, and only \$2.6 million remains to be raised for Phase One construction! A Capping Challenge is now underway, and all new donations are being matched dollar-for-dollar by a group of Selby Gardens' loyal champions.

Selby Gardens operates as The Living Museum<sup>®</sup>, featuring changing exhibitions and programs. Since introducing this operating model, membership has doubled to 17,000 member households, and annual attendance has grown 65% to 290,000 visitors! Carrying The Living Museum<sup>®</sup> operating model over to Selby's Historic Spanish Point campus has resulted in annual attendance quadrupling to 80,000 at this site! The exhibit <u>Seeing the Invisible: An Augmented Reality Contemporary Art Exhibition</u> has been extended for another year. Remember to <u>download the app</u> beforehand! Upcoming events include <u>The Orchid Show: Capturing the Perfect Shot</u> and <u>Tiffany: The Pursuit of Beauty in Nature</u>, part of the Jean & Alfred Goldstein Exhibition Series.

#### **Plant Research and Conservation**

Selby Gardens' core work in plant research and conservation continues. The Botany team recently completed a <u>botanical inventory of the Myakka Headwaters Preserve</u> and identified 282 species of vascular plants. The Selby team also participated in the international <u>City Nature Challenge</u>, during which nearly 6,000 observations of some 1,500 plant and animal species in the Sarasota region were recorded.

In June 2022, Selby Gardens welcomed attendees of the <u>Bromeliad Society International's World</u> <u>Bromeliad Conference</u>, which was hosted in Sarasota. We also collaborated with the <u>Center for</u> <u>Plant Conservation</u> to embark on storing seeds from Florida's imperiled plants at key conservation <u>seed banks</u>. In addition, we are working with the <u>Lemur Conservation</u> <u>Foundation</u> on a targeted feeding study to document and identify the plants serving as food for the lemur population on their grounds.

## **Children's Education and Community Outreach**

Selby Gardens' two campuses have been serving as places of learning and respite for the youth in our community including summer's six fun-filled weeks of <u>Camp Lookout</u> for 120 campers, including 11 who received scholarships. Interns participated in numerous areas of operations, including participants in the <u>Smithsonian Digital Learning and Engagement Internship</u> <u>Program and the Cross College Alliance Internship Program.</u>

In addition, Selby's <u>My Garden</u> partners have been enjoying underwritten campus-to-campus boat tours through our <u>Set Sail with Selby Gardens</u> program with kids from <u>Boys and Girls Clubs</u> of <u>Sarasota and Desoto Counties</u>, <u>Girls Inc.</u>, <u>SOAR Learning Center</u>, <u>Tidewell Foundation's Blue</u> <u>Butterfly program</u>, and <u>Unidos Now</u> experiencing the gifts of the Sarasota bayfront by boat, as well as the magic of Selby's two campuses.

It is inspiring to see the developments at this public garden. Selby acknowledges support from the community, which has allowed it to connect hundreds of thousands of children, adults, and families to the wonders of Sarasota's bayfront sanctuaries.



# **Choose One: Rose or Daisy Training Activity**

By Kathy Laurenhue, MA, CHP Photos by L. Fleming

Looking for activities that are appropriate for diverse groups you are working with including clients from multiple populations, care partners, professional development workshop attendees, and content creators? Turn to plant-based themes that are inclusive, creative, and fresh.

One effective activity that encourages participants to get to know each other better is called "Choose One." It begins with simple questions like, "Are you an early bird or a night owl?" and "Would you rather visit a garden or a museum?" These help leaders learn more about their participants' preferred routines and interests. In able-bodied groups, participants can stand on opposite sides of the room according to their answers and move about with each question. Those less physically mobile can simply sit in place and perhaps wave a colorful paper plate to indicate their preferences. Either way, participants can see who else shares their view, a step toward building camaraderie.

It is a deceptively simple activity appropriate for training sessions, virtual and in-person activities, care partner-client interactions, and people of wide-ranging ages, physical, and cognitive abilities. One important application is teaching care staff how to learn more about the people for which they care. To help them realize that the person being engaged is sharing the characteristics they value in themselves, wanting others to see these in them, and wants those traits to be drawn out more. This is especially true with metaphorical questions like:

Are you more like a rose or a daisy?

Allow deviation from the two choices – they can be a carnation or any other flower that suits them – because they are then asked to say why they chose the flower, and that's where it gets interesting.

People who identify with daisies tend to see themselves as sunny, cheerful, friendly, down to earth, able to thrive anywhere, and unpretentious. They also tend to think sophisticated roses look down on them, but I have never had a rose disparage a daisy, although roses do think they *smell* better than daisies.

Instead, those who see themselves as roses tend to consider themselves as complex. Don't make the mistake of thinking you understand them too easily. They have beauty, but they also have thorns, and will use them if they need to. They also have layers and layers of petals. When the outer ones wilt, they shed them and appear rejuvenated. Thus, they have more life in them than they are often given credit for. Although research shows that roses are fairly easy to grow, they tend to be proud of the nurturing and care they expect – what non-roses call "high maintenance". But the most amusing response was from someone who had a different take on that description: "I am a rose because I take a lot of manure in my life" (only he didn't say "manure").

A few more tips when using this activity, excerpted from *Creative Training and Programming Life Stories Choose 1 Exercise* (Laurenhue, 2018). Ask "Why?" at every opportunity. Asking "Why?" not only gives more information about people, but often expands our view of the question. Experience has shown that one person's reasoning for daisy or rose preferences may be different from the reason others prefer them. Listening to others opens us to new possibilities. In addition, sometimes we find that we are closer in our thinking than our opposite responses would indicate.

For people living in an assisted living facility or skilled nursing home, the staff usually don't know their strengths from their past, and aides don't think of trying to praise them. These types of prompts offer little ways to ask a resident for information, and help, and opening the chance to say thank-you. The recipient immediately feels a stronger relationship to the person who sees them as they want to be seen. The technique works well with people of all ages in all situations - teenagers, store clerks, challenging relatives, and clients across populations.

Laurenhue, K. (2018). Creative Training and Programming Life Stories Choose 1 Exercise. (link?) Laurenhue, K. (n.d.). Carl Warner loves his vegetables. <u>http://acheeringword.com/carl-warner-loves-his-vegetables/</u> Laurenhue, K. (n.d.). Food art intro activities. <u>http://acheeringword.com/food-art-intro/</u> Laurenhue, K. (n.d.). Chalk painting on leaves. <u>http://acheeringword.com/chalk-painting-on-leaves-2/</u>

The goals of Kathy Laurenhue, CEO (Chief Enthusiasm Officer) of <u>Wiser Now, Inc.</u> are to help people make new connections in their brains and with each other. Writing on topics that spread joy while being intellectually stimulating, her Wiser Now Wednesday, webinars, activity-generating slide shows, books, trivia quizzes, word games, and more (always written with a lighthearted bent), resonate with teachers, activity professionals, families, home health caregivers, and corporate healthcare businesses.



## What Are Autism Tool Kits?

By Lesley Fleming, HTR Photos by M. Wallis & K. Li. Unsplash

When working with people on the autism spectrum, it is important to find what works best for each person. Asking the individual, their parent, educator or service provider will often elicit great suggestions.

An ever-expanding variety of tools are available to support individuals at home, school, the workplace and leisure environments. Tool kits refer to combinations of tools, often with a specific focus addressing challenges, for example, sensory, visual, or communication. Some autism tool kits are intended to ease challenges for specific purposes like dental visits, school interactions, employment, or situations where safety may be an issue. Some tool kits, like the ones from the Halifax (Nova Scotia) Library System are available to borrow (like books), with the express purpose of experiencing and testing different tools prior to purchase. Their kits were developed in collaboration with <u>Autism</u> <u>Nova Scotia</u>, with <u>photos of available tools</u> and kits.

Tool kits typically fall into one of the main categories – sensory tools, communication tools, visual tools, and fidget tools.

<u>Visual Tools</u> assist with language processing, following instructions and accomplishing tasks. These include dry erase boards, checklists, sand timers, dual power times to show time counting up or down, Choices sample (used when faced with too many choices or to prompt an individual to start something), and 'working for' sample for tracking and rewarding good behavior and work.

<u>Sensory Tools</u> used in support of self-regulation, particularly in situations where noise or environments can be distracting include ghost suit (zip inside to exclude and minimize sounds, sights and distractions; noise cancelling headphones; mini etch a sketch; weighted lap pad; sensory bubble and spiral tubes, Exersit air cushion; and harmony rollers.



Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with repetitive behavior, social skills, verbal and non-verbal communication and how the brain environmental information processes (Autismspeaks, n.d.). Research has determined that there are subtypes influenced by genetic and environmental factors. "Each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges...[impacting how they] learn, think and problem-solve". "In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association merged four distinct autism diagnoses into one umbrella diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They included autistic disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome.

<u>Communication Tools</u> recognize that communication occurs through verbal and non-verbal interactions including facial expressions, hand gestures, pictures, and written notes. Sample tools include reusable dry erase boards, instruction binder with communication cards, picture exchange system (PECS) with communication cards, and American Sign Language flash cards.

<u>Fidget Tools</u> which can help focus attention and ground or calm include: 3D art pin pad, Gum ball, DNA sensory ball, Japanese stick, zipper bandz, and atomic stress ball.

Many resources are available through organizations like <u>Autism Speaks</u>, <u>Autism Society</u> and <u>Asperger/Autism Network</u>. Tools, tool kits and other resources recognize challenges faced by people living with autism, and their right to participate in all types of activities.

Coury, D.L., Murray, D.S., Fedele, A., Hess, T., Kelly, A. & Kuhlthau, K.A. (2020). The Autism Treatent Network: Bringing best practices to all children with autism. *American academy of Pediatrics, 145*(Supplement 1),

Fleming, L. (2022). Autism took kits. Digging In, 8(4), 12.

Barrios-Fernández, S.; Gozalo, M.; Díaz-González, B.; García-Gómez, A. (2020). A complementary sensory tool for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Children*, 7, 244. https://doi.org/10.3390/children7110244

Lesley Fleming, HTR was introduced to these tools at the Halifax Central Library, Nova Scotia.



**Florida Horticulture for Health Network** To receive *Cultivate* contact <u>FLHort4Health@outlook.com</u>



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Upcoming Issue of *Cultivate* Spring 2023: A Framework for Categorizing Healing Gardens

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Common Roots Bi-Hi Urban Farm, J. Muniz, M. Wallis & K. Li, Unsplash

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