

# CONTINUING EDUCATION: Horticultural Therapy

## Therapeutic Horticulture

Therapeutic horticulture is a process that uses plants and plant-related activities through which participants strive to improve their well-being through active or passive involvement. In a therapeutic horticulture program, goals are not clinically defined and documented but the leader will have training in the use of horticulture as a medium for human well-being. This type of program may be found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings.

## Horticultural Therapists

Horticultural therapists are specially educated and trained professionals who involve the client in any phase of gardening - from propagation to selling products - as a means of bringing about improvement in their life. As members of treatment or care team, horticultural therapists determine individual goals and work plans to help clients improve skills and maximize abilities.

## Certification

Licensing and certification are currently required to be a horticultural therapist. AHTA offers voluntary professional registration for horticultural therapists that meet specific education and experience criteria.

## Prevalence of Horticultural Therapy Programs and Healing Gardens

At this time horticultural therapy programs are not required to be registered or associated with any type of professional regulating body so it is difficult to say with precision how many programs are offered across the country or what types of programs are offered. The number of horticultural therapy and therapeutic horticulture programs has clearly increased over the past decade.



## People & Facilities Benefitting from Horticultural Therapy & Therapeutic Gardens

People of all ages and special needs can benefit from involvement in horticultural therapy. Programs operate throughout the United States as well as in other countries and can be found in the following facility and program types:

- Vocational, pre-vocational, occupational, and rehabilitation programs
- Psychiatric hospitals and mental health programs
- Substance abuse programs
- Hospitals, clinics, and skilled nursing facilities
- Hospice and palliative care programs
- Cancer centers
- Correctional facilities
- Shelters for the homeless and victims of abuse
- Public and private schools, Assisted Living and Senior centers
- Adult day care
- Community and botanic gardens

## Benefits of Horticultural Therapy and Therapeutic Gardens

The benefits of involvement in horticultural activities and exposure to nature can be seen in cognitive, psychological, social, and physical realms and research continues to reveal these connections across many groups of people. The following list includes some of the benefits that have been cited in the literature. Please note that many of these studies report on specific populations and the benefits may or may not be applicable to all groups.



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