



Dietitian's Dish

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Garden Therapy

Most of us know that eating food grown in gardens can be beneficial for our health, but did you know that planting a garden or even just being in a garden can also improve your health?

Garden therapy, also known as Horticultural Therapy, **“is a professional practice that uses the cultivation of plants and gardening activities to improve the mental and physical health of its participants.”**- The Horticultural Therapy Institute.

The use of plants and gardens in therapy can be seen in ancient literature. In the 19th century it was noted to have positive effects on individuals with mental illness. It wasn't until the 1940s and 1950s when it began to gain expanded acceptance in rehabilitative care of hospitalized war veterans. The practice has since grown to embrace a much wider range of diagnoses and therapeutic options in rehab, vocational, and community settings.



Benefits of Garden Therapy

- Reduces stress
- Reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Lessens feelings of loneliness
- Improves memory, cognitive ability, and socialization
- Promotes a meditative mindset



Types of Gardens

Many healthcare organizations have taken advantage of the therapeutic benefits of gardens. Some of these transformed spaces include greenery and water features while other focus on flowers, herbs, and produce. One healthcare provider even created a butterfly preserve for their therapy garden!

A few examples of garden designs by healthcare providers can be seen here, but the benefits of horticulture don't require construction. Starting seedlings in a pot, planting in a window box, and even arranging fresh cut flowers are all ways to engage with the elements of gardens.

