

Gardening Therapy

What Is Gardening Therapy?



Gardening therapy is an integrative approach that uses nature-based somatic and sensory processing interventions for personal well-being.

Therapeutic Benefits

- Learn new things, play, create, make mistakes in a contained and safe manner
- Improve memory and increases neurogenesis
- Contribute to the body's natural balance and wellbeing
- Mirrors our sense of self
- Develop self-compassion and a sense of purpose
- Provides metaphors; a simple way to understand complex reasoning
- Meaning-Making; tuning into the emotions elicited from observing
- Place Attachment; an emotional attachment to the garden, helping us develop secure attachments
- Trauma-Processing; Ritualist and symbolic, a tool for empowerment over a traumatic incident

Gardening Relationships

- Passive Relationship: Experiencing nature with our senses, observationally, using a "sit spot"
- Active Relationship: Using our bodies to co-create with nature.
- These relationships are dynamic! We can go back and forth between them.



Who is a gardening therapist?

- May be counsellor, a social worker, a horticultural therapist, a nurse, or another type of mental health professional
- Uses therapeutic interventions & goal setting
- Integrates with therapeutic approaches; talk therapy, journaling, or mindfulness



THE MINDFUL GARDEN

We can use our imaginations to practice mindfulness! By doing so, we can create or reflect upon a garden space that invites you into a feeling of safety and containment. This can be done with a real or imagined garden. You can revisit this place anytime you like, whenever you feel stressed or anxious. Using the prompts below, or create your own! This can be as descriptive or as simple as you'd like. Close or lower your eyes, and envision the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings of this space. Sit with each section for a moment and write down a word to describe the way you feel.

1

As you enter your garden, what greets you? Do you go through a door? A gate? Is there a path? What is it made of? Are there walls or a fence around your garden? Are they tall or short? What is the weather like? What season? Spend a moment here at the entrance. I Feel _____

2

When you look around your garden, what do you see? How big is the garden? What types of plants? What colours stand out to you? Are there flowers? Is there wildlife? Is there a place to sit? Is there anyone else there? Spend a moment looking around your space. I Feel _____

3

When you listen to your garden, what do you hear? Are there birds? The sound of flowing water? Can you hear the wind? Animals? Is it quiet? Take a moment to listen to your garden. I Feel _____

4

What do you smell in your garden? Your favourite flowers are here. What do they smell like? What do the smells remind you of? Are there trees? You can lean up against your favourite trees here. What do you smell? I Feel _____

5

As you become more relaxed in your garden, notice if there is anything you can taste? Take a look around, your favourite edible plant is near by. It is fresh, ripe, and ready to eat. Take a bite, how does it taste? Is it sweet? Earthy? Spicy? How does it feel to eat it? I Feel _____

6

As you move around, you notice you can feel your garden. How does the air feel on your skin? Is it warm, cool, raining? You can lay on the ground here, you are safe. How does the earth feel beneath you? Are you lying on grass? Clover? A bed of moss? Lie here a moment and be one with your garden. I Feel _____

This is a place you can visit anytime. This garden is yours and yours alone, a place of refuge, calm and creativity. Visit this place when you feel stressed, or you need a break. This garden is always here, waiting for you.

