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Title

Horticultural therapy

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Author

Horticultural therapy (also known as **social and therapeutic horticulture** or **STH**) is defined by the **American Horticultural Therapy Association** (AHTA) as the engagement of a person in **gardening** and plant-based activities, facilitated by a trained **therapist**, to achieve specific therapeutic treatment goals. The visual aesthetics of plants are known to elicit feelings of inner peace, which generates positive emotions toward a meaningful appreciation of life. Direct contact with plants guides the individual's focus away from stress enhancing their overall quality of life.^[1] The AHTA believes that horticultural therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan.^[2] Horticultural therapists are specially educated and trained members of rehabilitation teams (with **doctors**, **psychiatrists**, **psychologists**, **occupational therapists** and other) who involve the client in all phases of gardening, from propagation to selling products, as a means of bringing about improvement in their life.

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According to the American Horticultural Therapy Association, Ancient Egyptian physicians prescribed walks around a garden for patients with mental illness; which makes the first sign of the therapeutic process in Alexandria and Ancient Egypt through Renaissance Europe.^[3] During the Middle Ages, on the grounds of a monastery hospital, plants were used to express purpose of cheering up melancholy patients. Also, the gardens were used to treat both physical and mental ailments of sickness who visited them.^[4] The first modern documentation of horticulture being used as a treatment for mental health purposes was in the 1800s. Dr. Benjamin Rush discovered that field labor in a farm setting helped attain positive outcomes for clients with mental illness (Simson & Straus, 2003). This discovery lead many hospitals in the western world to begin using horticulture as a means to start therapeutically treating patients with mental health and developmental disabilities. In 1817, the Asylum for Persons Deprived of Their Reason, now known as Friends Hospital, constructed an environment with landscaping, paths and a park atmosphere in effort to assist patients in their recovery. In 1879 Friends Hospital built the first greenhouse that was

