

Horticulture Therapy: A Healing Tool for Combating Depression

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Abstract : Turning dreams into reality, the lifelong passion of Mr. Spruth and the company is to transform garbage-filled courtyards into flourishing flower and vegetable gardens, bringing light, hope, and wellness to not just the space but to the populations served within these public and private spaces. As an Expressive Art Therapist at Cook County Jail, Eric Spruth has implemented gardening projects, mobile radish carts, plant fostering systems, and large-scale murals. Lindsey Herbert, the Manager of Operations and Events at the International Museum of Surgical Science, supports gardening projects with Mr. Spruth along the front lawn of the museum, which will eventually accumulate into a community wellness garden. Mr. Spruth and Ms. Herbert both have dedicated efforts towards fostering awareness of hope and help and accountability for physical and mental wellbeing. Medicinal plants can rightfully be called one of nature's wonderful healing tools with therapeutic powers. They can inhibit and kill bacteria, lower blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugar, prevent blood clotting, boost the immune system, and serve as a digestive aid. Some plants have the ability to stimulate the lymphatic system, which expedites the removal of waste products from the body to fight off evil toxins. Many plants are considered effective antioxidants to protect cells against free radical damage, serving to prevent some forms of cancer, heart disease, strokes, and viral infections. Garlic alone can provide us with over two hundred unusual chemicals that have the capability of protecting the human body from a wide variety of diseases. Besides the medicinal qualities of plants, plant and vegetable gardens also have an echoing effect on non-participants to look at something beautiful rather than a concrete courtyard or an unkempt lawn in front of a beautiful building. Plants also purify spaces and affect mood with color therapy. Collective gardening can foster a sense of community and purpose. Additionally, by recognizing the ever-evolving planet with global warming, horticulture therapy teaches important lessons in responsibility, accountability, and sustainability. Growing local food provides an opportunity to be involved in your own mental and physical health and gives you a chance for your own self-resilience, combating depression and a lack of nutrition. In adolescents, the process of watering and caring for plants can teach important life lessons that transcend beyond the garden by providing knowledge on how to care for yourself and how to be an active member of society. It also gives a sense of purpose and pride in transforming a small seed into a plant that can be consumed or enjoyed by others. Mr. Spruth and Ms. Herbert recognize the importance of bringing more green spaces to urban areas, both to serve a nutritional benefit and provide a beautiful transformation to underutilized areas. Gardens can bring beauty, wellness, and hope to dark spaces and provide immeasurable benefits for all.

Keywords : growth, hope, mental health, sustainability, transformation, wellness

Conference Title : ICDTRE 2023 : International Conference on Depression Treatment and Regular Exercise

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : July 17-18, 2023