



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

To define a usable template of guidelines and objectives for healthcare designers planning to construct healing gardens.

Guidelines for the design of a healing garden for the rehabilitation of psychiatric patients

Erbino, C., Toccolini, A., Vagge, I., Ferrario, P. S., 2015 | *Journal of Agricultural Engineering*. Volume 46, Issue 2, Page 43-51

Key Concepts/Context

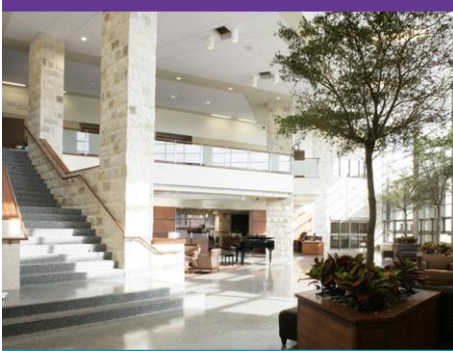
Healing gardens can be defined as plant-populated areas designed to support and improve patient health and well-being. Previous studies have indicated that healing gardens are effective tools for improving physical and mental health in patients, families, and staff, ultimately leading to reduced care costs and general quality of life. Spatial, environmental, and financial resources differ depending on the healthcare institution in question. For this reason, a “master plan” of guidelines and goals behind designing healing gardens could act as a helpful template for any designer working to build a healing garden. This study focuses on implementing such a plan in a specific setting, allowing for the incorporation of patient perspectives in final design decisions.

Methods

The researchers conducted site analyses in an area that covered 4510m² at an altitude of 278 meters. Weather patterns and sunlight exposure levels were tested, as well as different planting patterns to assure root system functionality between plants. Focus groups were held with patients to assess preferences for outdoor space use and design preferences. Patient preferences and field observations were used to formulate the “master plan” or layout of the healing garden.

Findings

The authors identified several outdoor activities that were commonly desired among study participants, including relaxing, rehabilitative activities (games, art therapy, etc.), eating, and physical activity. Important concepts that should be embedded into healing garden design were identified as: contact with nature, patient autonomy and ease of orientation, safety and comfort, family atmosphere,



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and freedom of choice among places and functions. Overall, study participants welcomed the idea of the healing garden and anticipated that it would generally enhance quality of life.

Limitations

This study took place at a single healthcare facility in a geographically unique area. A relatively small patient population participated in the study, making the sources of design preferences relatively limited and not universally applicable to all patient populations.

Design Implications

Healing gardens can enhance the quality of life for both patients and staff, and can even improve the recovery time for certain patient populations. Various considerations for regional climate, altitude, and other outdoor factors should be taken into account at any healing garden location. Designers might consider consulting the patients themselves for design preferences when planning the garden layout.

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