

Healing gardens provide benefits to a diverse population. A healing garden heals us in many ways: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. They heal the soul, bring joy, peace, balance and have the added benefit of helping our physical self as we work to maintain it.

A healing garden can be your own place of refuge, a restorative landscape that is a place for contemplation that allows you to revive in the serenity and beauty of nature. Regardless of age or culture, humans find nature restorative.

Healing gardens provide:

- Relief from symptoms
- Stress and anxiety reduction
- Improvement in overall sense of wellbeing and hopefulness
- Distraction
- Enhanced immune function
- They encourage exercise, walk and exploration

When creating a healing garden incorporate the following elements: water, scent, shade, color, sound, seating, paths and solar lighting. Examples include:

*Water* – waterfalls, fountains, ponds and natural water bodies

*Sound* – rustling leaves, grasses and habitat for birds

*Color* – cool colors are soothing (purple, blue, and white) and promote tranquility

*Shade* – trees, trellises, fences, and walls for wind protection

*Scent* – use herbs

*Touch* – soft flowers, fuzzy leaves, springy moss, rough bark and prickly seed pods

In an institutional setting avoid abstract art and gazing balls as they promote the opposite effects. Finally, remember to place a healing garden away from smoking areas and the mechanical sounds of an air conditioner or the sounds of the city.

## **Native Plant Resources:**

Tallamy, Douglas. "Bringing Nature Home: How You Can sustain Wildlife with Native Plants" Timber Press Inc. 2007.

Cornell University Woody Plants Database

<http://woodyplants.cals.cornell.edu/home>

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, University of Texas at Austin.

[www.wildflower.org/explore/](http://www.wildflower.org/explore/)

National Park Service. Least Wanted: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas. Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Work Group.

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/factmain.htm>

North American Native Plant Society.

<http://www.nanps.org/>

Sustainable Sites Initiative Collaboration between Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, the United States botanic Garden and the American Society of Landscape Architects.

[www.Landscapeforlife.org](http://www.Landscapeforlife.org)

United States Forest Service. Celebrating Wildflowers: Gardening for Pollinators.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/gardening.shtml>

Cornell's List for plant alternatives

<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/agriculture/ornamental-crops/greenhouse-resources/alternatives-ornamental-invasive-plants-sustainable-solution-new-york-state>

## Health & Wellness Resources:

<http://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/>

Greenery makes life more manageable. In a study conducted in a Chicago public housing development, women who lived in apartment buildings with trees and greenery immediately outside reported greater effectiveness and less procrastination in dealing with their major life issues than those living in barren but otherwise identical buildings. In addition, the women in greener surroundings found their problems to be less difficult and of shorter duration. Exposure to green surroundings refreshes the ability to concentrate, leading to greater effectiveness at coping with major life issues. And, in this study, even small amounts of greenery—a few trees and a patch of grass—helped inner city residents to feel and do better. (Kuo, F.E. (2001). Coping with poverty: Impacts of environment and attention in the inner city. *Environment & Behavior* 33.1: 5-34.)

This study examines the history of healing gardens, problems facing veteran populations today, current treatment methods for PTSD, and how healing gardens could be beneficial to veterans with PTSD. A Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare facility that is in the process of implementing a healing garden was used to determine how their PTSD patients will potentially use a healing garden space during treatment. Anderson, B. J. (2011). An Exploration of the Potential Benefits of Healing Gardens on Veterans with PTSD. All Graduate Reports and Creative Projects. Paper 50.

Results from survey respondents at the Tennessee Green Industries Field Day (McMinnville), and the Tennessee State Fair (Nashville) suggest that although gardeners select from a wide range of plant materials and activities in an individualistic manner, the interaction with nature in a nurturing environment provides a number of benefits important to them, including an opportunity for self-expression, physical and physiological benefits, and restorative experiences. (Catanzaro, C. and Ekanem, E. (2004). Home Gardeners Value Stress Reduction and Interaction with Nature. *Acta Horticulturae*. (ISHS) 639:269-275.)

Directed attention plays an important role in human information processing; its fatigue, in turn, has far-reaching consequences. Attention Restoration Theory provides an analysis of the kinds of experiences that lead to recovery from such fatigue. Natural environments turn out to be particularly rich in the characteristics necessary for restorative experiences. Kaplan, Stephen (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. Volume 15: Issue 3: 169-182.

This study revealed important benefits of gardening on physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being, and highlighted a key role of gardening as a coping strategy for living with stressful life experiences. The prospective nature of the study revealed the personal and subjective ways in which interest in gardening might change in response to the person's own situation and needs. (Unruh, A.M. (2004). The Meaning of Gardens and Gardening in Daily Life: A Comparison Between Gardeners With Serious Health Problems And Healthy Participants. Acta Horticulturae. (ISHS) 639:67-73.)

**Other Healing Garden Resources:**

University of Minnesota Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing at <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu>

# Healing Garden with Native Plants

Version 1

Urban setting - Full Sun/Small space

ERC - Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) the blue berries are winter food for many birds, evergreen, 40' tall, the cedar waxwing is named for this tree.

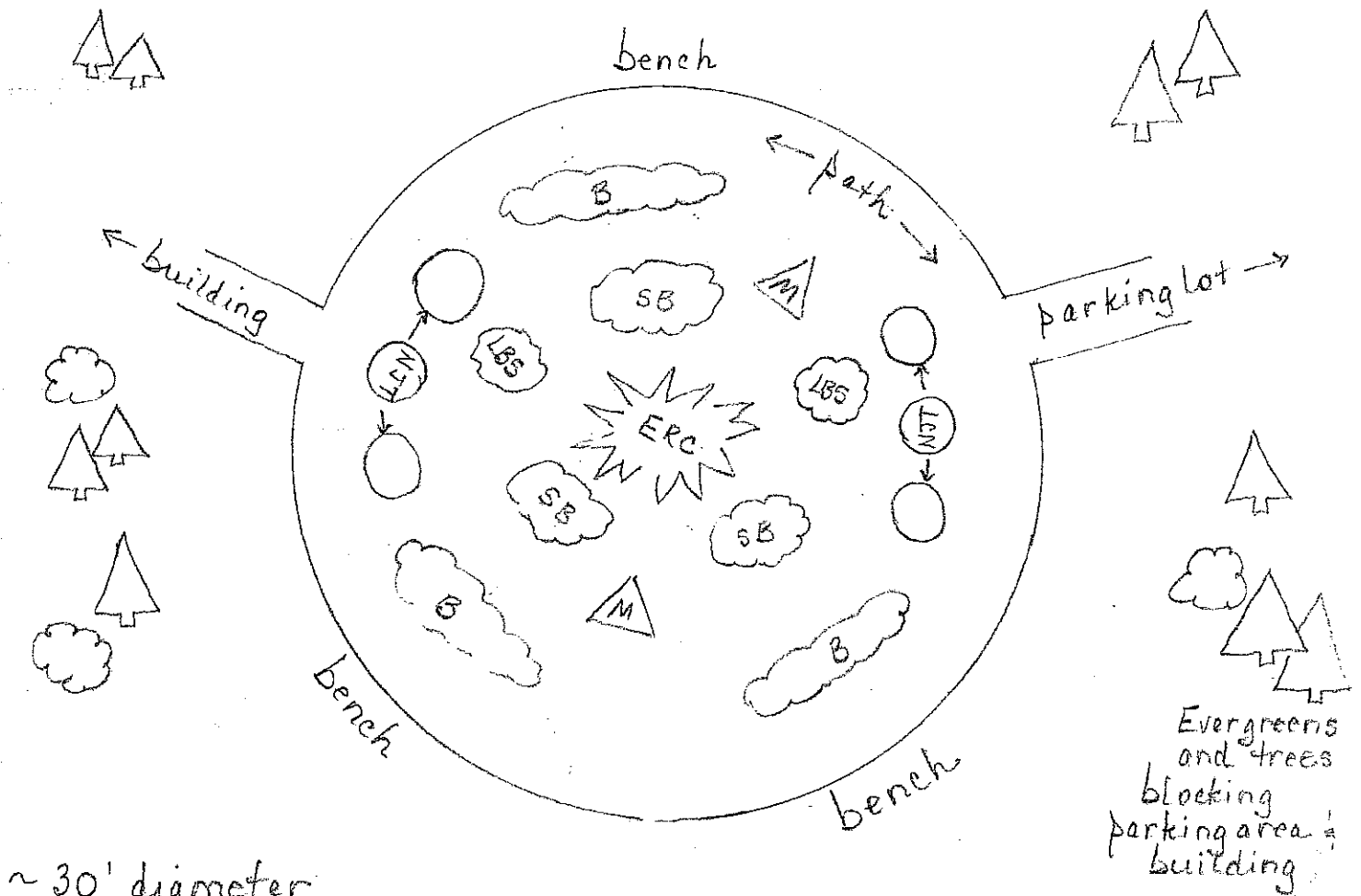
SB - SpiceBush (*Lindera benzoin*) deciduous shrub, 6-12' tall, red fruit, yellow flowers in spring, butterflies love this plant, need both female and male plant to get fruit.

LBS - Little BlueStem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) prairie grass, 1' - 3' tall, full sun, dry sites, new growth is bluish turning to a red fall color, seeds are a food source for birds.

NJT - New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) 3' tall, white flowering deciduous shrub, the dried leaves make a tea.

M - Monarda / Wild Bergamot (*fistulosa*) lavender flowers, 4' tall perennial in the mint family, hummingbirds frequent this plant.

B - Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*) 6" height, blue flowers, forms carpets and makes a good addition to a rock garden.



# Healing Garden with Native Plants

Version 2

Rural setting

Shade on edges / Sun in the middle

AW - American wisteria (*wisteria frutescens*) woody deciduous vine with purple flowers, 25 ft. attracts butterflies, deer resistant.

FRA - False Rue Anemone (*Enemion/isopyrum biternatum*) perennial, 8" tall, white flowers.

RCB - Red Chokeberry (*aronia arbutifolia*) 7' tall, 4' wide, white flowers, foliage turns bright red in autumn.

LBS - Little Bluestem (*schizachyrium scoparium*) 2 foot tall tufted perennial grass, seeds are consumed by small mammals, new growth is blueish and turns a reddish-gold color.

BFI - Blue False Indigo (*baptisia australis*) blue pea-like flowers, 3' tall

WBT - White Bearded Tongue (*penstemon digitalis*) white flowers in spring, attracts butterflies, 4' tall.

SPB - Sweet Pepperbush (*clethra alnifolia*) white flowers that bloom in shade, 6' tall, the leaves look like an alder leaf [the greek word 'klethra' means alder].

MW - Milkweed (*asclepias*) Carl Linnaeus named this plant after Asclepius: the Greek God of Healing, larval food source for monarch butterflies.

