Healing gardens: recommendations and criteria for design

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Abstract

The French Alzheimer plan anticipates new specialized structures for cognitive rehabilitation and psycho-behavioural therapy of Alzheimer's patients: the cognitive-behavioural units as follow-care units, the units of reinforced hospitalization inside the long term care units and the adapted activities units. This plan indicates the need to make healing gardens integral parts of these units. The benefits of green space in urban environments have been demonstrated with regards to physical, psychological and sociological effects and similarly studies in hospitals have revealed objective and measurable improvements of patients well being. Although green spaces and gardens are available in many French care units, they are rarely specifically adapted to the needs of Alzheimer's patients. For the garden "art, memory and life" a specific concept guided by a neuropsychological approach was developed, complemented by an artistic vision based on cultural invariants. It is already used in the frame of non-pharmacological therapies to improve symptoms such as deambulation, sleep disorders, apathy and aggressive behaviors. Based on the literature, and our experience and research, recommendations for the design of such gardens dedicated to Alzheimer's patients can be proposed. Beyond taking into account obvious aspects relating to security, allowing for free access, a careful design of walk-ways and a conscious choice of plants is needed. A systematic analysis of the existing green spaces or garden must be conducted in order to pinpoint the weakness of the space and identify the potential for developing it into a real healing garden. Evaluation of adapted questionnaires for users and professionals allow to establish a list of requirements combining both user requests and therapeutic needs as basis for the design of the garden as well as to evaluate during the course of the project, whether the needs of the various stakeholders have been met or if adjustments are necessary.

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The fundamental proposition of the book, called Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations, is that individuals who are exposed to natural, garden-like settings can experience reductions in stress, improved immune functioning, better pain control management and improved physical and emotional well being. To make this case, chapters by Roger S. Ulrich and Terry Hartig provide detailed accounts of research on the restorative power of nature, stress reduction and the meaning of health. I think it will be valuable for me in my teaching. It so easily, naturally, and sort of organically met the criteria. I think I also have a bias for research that you can take and use, that you can put under your arm and put by your drafting table. Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations 1 / 5 Publisher: Wiley Release Date: 2 / 5 Unique and comprehensive, Healing Gardens provides up-to-date information on the therapeutic benefits of healing gardens with practical design guidance from leading experts in the field. Healing Gardens is an invaluable guide for landscape architects and others involved in creating and maintaining medical facilities as well as an extremely useful reference for those responsible for patient care. Order your copy of this practical guide to the therapeutic effects and design of healing gardens.