



Therapeutic Benefits of Botanical Gardens





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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will be able to identify 3 ways botanical garden experiences can enhance relaxation and mindfulness.
2. Participants will be able to identify 2 relaxation activities that can be performed in a botanical garden.
3. Participants will be able to discern the difference between meditation and contemplation.
4. Learn to explain how various aspects of a garden can be metaphors for life experiences.

“From the beginning of recorded time, societies have shared the universal myth of paradise as a garden.

The very word paradise comes from an old Persian word, Pairideza, which means walled garden.”

Marilyn Barrett, Ph.D

Creating Eden

History

In order to get a better understanding of the topic, we will look at the history of botanical gardens.

How botanical gardens have served different purposes for people in various cultures and throughout recorded time.

How contemporary botanical gardens can be utilized for relaxation and mindfulness.

Gardens are referenced in many ancient religious texts.

In the Bible, the first reference is the Garden of Eden.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon are also mentioned in the Bible.

The Garden of Gethsemane is referenced in the New Testament.

In Islam, there are verses in the Quran referencing gardens.

'Whoever obeys God and his Chosen One will be chosen to live in gardens beneath which flow rivers, and where they will live eternally'
(Quran 4:13).

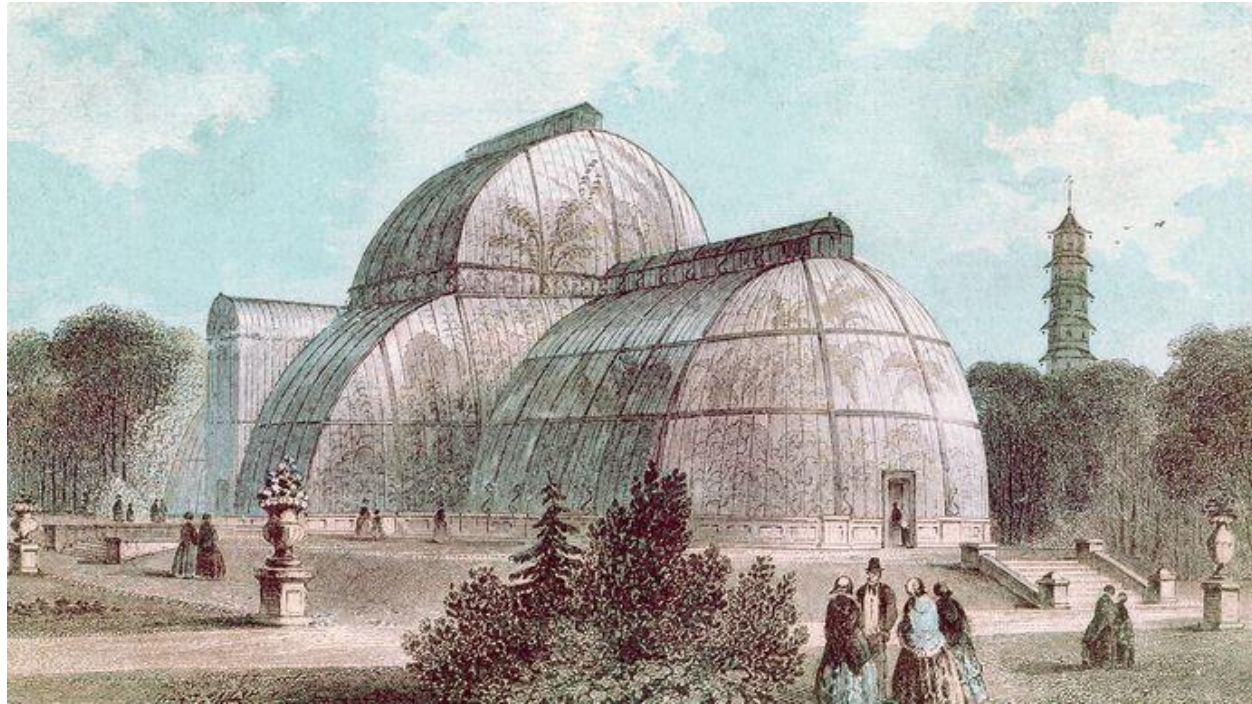
The Zen garden is the best-known type of Buddhist garden. But the fame of Zen gardens is out of all proportion to their numerical significance. Zen ideas influenced the Japanese from the 12th century onwards, inspired by Chan Buddhism and Chan gardens in China. The term 'Zen garden' was devised in the 1930s and does not have an agreed or satisfactory definition.

- From Gardenvisit.com/history

A Hindu garden is a tropical paradise resplendent with beautiful tropical flowers that explode with bright color and sweet aroma. Other features include shady trees, walkways, water features (such as natural ponds, waterfalls, or streams), and quiet places to sit and meditate.

-Gardeningknowhow.com, Apr 24, 2022

In Western culture, since the Renaissance, gardens were first developed for scientific and especially medicinal purposes.



During the rise of European empires and colonial expansion, gardens were used to display important plant “trophies” from distant lands.



Trophy plants were also displayed in the estates of the wealthy.

In the 18th century, glass houses or conservatories were built to house plants that were susceptible to cold weather.

The garden as an educational institution.

Botanical gardens are education centers.

A place to learn:

- About plants,
- About gardening,
- About ecosystems,
- About conservation and preservation.

Visitors can learn plant names:

Latin names and common names.

Can learn how plants propagate, how roots systems develop and help plants to grow or spread. How plants transition through stages of development and see new plants.

Some gardens offer classes on growing and raising plants of all kinds, from cactus and succulents to tropical fruit trees and flowering orchids.

Learning about plants leads to learning about plant eco-systems and how plant and animal lives are interrelated.

Learning lends itself to understanding conservation and preservation.

Using Metaphors from the Garden.

The garden as a healing space. A space to get away from noise, crowds, plastics, fluorescent lights, airless offices and shopping malls. [or big box stores].

-Marilyn Barrett

Botanical Gardens, even when located in dense urban areas, offer respite from the pollution of city life.

Some gardens are landscaped to create noise barriers from streets and highways.

Others create elevated space that is a contrast to flat terrain.

Still others, offer waterscapes and alternate environments that create *other world experiences*.

Some gardens re-create life from periods gone by, such as colonial America or gardens of the Gilded Age.

METAPHORS

Replenishing:

Soils in gardens are often replenished. Similarly, a person needs to replenish one's self when coping with physical or emotional stress.

The garden can be a way to see similarities between the world of plants and one's own personal needs.

Life Cycle

The natural cycle of the garden is a metaphor for our own developmental stages.

Many botanical gardens offer memorial plaques or other ways to recognize or give remembrance to loved ones.

Also, many cemeteries have garden names.

Adaptation:

Identify what plants need to adapt.

Identify how plants have adapt to certain environments.

For instance, a root system may be bound by the confines of a pot or vase but the plant continues to thrive. Some plants spread roots far and wide in order to obtain nutrients, including water, from other parts of the garden.

Orchids look almost dead after they bloom.

Co-existence.

Many plants co-exist with one another. They form symbiotic relationships.

For instance, epiphytes or air plants use a tree for support. As a result of the epiphytes retaining some moisture, the tree benefits from moisture during periods or drought.

The garden for recreation:

Gardens become venues for parties & receptions.

Gardens are places for some children's activities, such as egg hunts, scavenger hunts, craft parties, etc.

Gardens are meeting places for clubs and social groups.

The Garden as a Healing Space

Garden atmospheres are perfect places for meditation, contemplation and even exercise such as Tai Chi and Chi Qong.

Some gardens are landscaped to reduce nearby urban noise.

Some gardens have grassy spaces, ideal for movement therapies.

Mindfulness:

the quality of being conscious or aware of something,

a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts and body sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

Garden activities that promote mindfulness:

5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique

Rainbow grounding technique

Palette walk

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

Simple way to focus on the present moment and be aware of the five senses.

5 things you can see

4 things you can hear

3 things you can touch

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

Can substitute something for taste:

1 thing for which you are grateful,

Say aloud a line of scripture.

Rainbow Grounding Technique

Identify one item in the garden for each color of the rainbow.

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet.



Palette Walk

Create a palette of colors with crayons, pastels, paints or markers.

Walk around the garden and match each color to something in the garden.

Participants and even re-name each color, based on their findings.

Philosopher William James stated there are two types of attention:

Involuntary attention, like hearing the sound of cicadas '

Voluntary attention, like listening to the lyrics in a song.

Voluntary attention is used in solving problems. But voluntary attention needs re-charging and what helps us re-charge is involuntary attention.

Botanical gardens provide an opportunity to change from involuntary attention to voluntary attention.

Contemplation is the action of looking thoroughly at something for a long time.

Botanical gardens provide a space for contemplation.

Contemplation calms our mind and spirit.

Thus, it can help us relieve worries and stress. It also leaves room for our mind to wander and then to focus again. This helps us clarify our thoughts and have new ideas.

Unlike the practices of mindfulness or meditation, you don't lose yourself in the experience. When you engage in contemplation, you are thinking about an experience in words or thoughts. Contemplation is an exercise of reflection on, rather than presence with, or absorption in, an experience.

The primary advantage humans have over animals is our ability to contemplate. In doing so, we learn about ourselves, our lives, and our situation.

Contemplation allows one to think about the past.

Think about what has worked well and what has not.

Plan for the future and think about consequences of available choices.

Allows one to develop a plan of action.

Botanical Gardens can be a place of fantasy.

Part of being human is the ability to imagine other worlds, to fantasize. It's a vital talent that underlies many others, including planning, lying and problem-solving.

-Christian Jarrett

Fantasy needs to be distinct from reality.

Botanical Gardens can be a place for doing nothing.

The Dutch concept of niksens is the art of doing nothing with a purpose to do nothing. It is believed this helps decrease anxiety and boost productivity.

Unlike mindfulness, niksens is short periods or mindless relaxation.

-Elisabeth Almekinder

Forest Bathing

The purpose of forest bathing is to “absorb the forest atmosphere” by spending time in nature. It can mean walking in the woods or doing low impact activity like sitting, doing Tai Chi or other quiet time activities. The recommended time in the woods is at least 20 minutes a day.

The concept of forest bathing (shinrin yoku) is explained in a book of the same title by Dr. Qing Li, Chairman of the Japanese Society of Forest Medicine.

Dr. Qing Li explains how being in and around trees in a forest can help increase the body's NK cells as well as anti-cancer protein granzyme A, granzyme B and perforin.

Studies of people who partake in forest bathing show significantly decreased levels of stress hormones.

Subjective scores for tension / anxiety, anger /hostility and fatigue / confusion have been identified with forest bathing.

Dr. Qing Li says by 2050, 66% of the world's population will live in cities.

He sites a study by the Environmental Protection Agency that says the average American spends 93% of his or her time indoors.

Can spending time in botanical gardens
have effects similar to forest bathing?

Incorporating other activities into a visit to
a botanical garden.

Garden bingo

Birding bingo

Nature Journaling

Garden Scavenger Hunt.

Finding specific plants, like a palm tree, a flowering shrub, a plant with short leaves.

Or looking at variations in a theme; How many shades of green can you find. Try a senses scavenger hunt.

Selfie scavenger hunt.

Suessian plant hunt.

Finding monocultures versus diverse plant beds.

Garden photography

A garden can prompt memories. Visitors can talk about their first garden experience.

A botanic garden is an institution holding documented collections of living plants of scientific research, conservation, display and education.

The essential purpose is the acquisition and dissemination of botanical knowledge.

Finding Botanical Gardens is easy. There are dozens of them in Florida.

Visit a garden and try some of the activities listed in this presentation.

Try them with the clients you serve or refer people to a nearby garden and provide some activity ideas to try when visiting.

<https://www.publicgardens.org/>

American Public Garden Association

<https://selby.org/>

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Sarasota, FL

<https://boktowergardens.org/>

Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Wales, FL

<https://www.leugardens.org/>

Harry P. Leu Gardens, Orlando, FL

<https://mckeegarden.org/>

McKee Botanical Garden, Vero Beach, FL

<https://morikami.org/>

Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, Boca Raton, FL

<https://kanapaha.org/>

Kanapaha Botanical Gardens, Gainesville, FL

<https://www.ncarboretum.org/>

North Carolina Arboretum, Raleigh, NC

<https://www.belleisleconservancy.org/>

Belle Isle Conservatory

Creating Eden: The Garden as a Healing Space,

Marilyn Barrett

ISBN:0062500767

May 1992

HarperCollins Publishers

Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness

Dr. Qing Li

ISBN: **052555985X**

April 2018, Penguin Books Limited

Niksen: Embracing the Dutch Art of Doing Nothing

By Olga Mecking

January, 2018, HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN:0358395313

Fantasy-prone Children Struggle to Apply Lessons from Fantasy Stories, Christian Jarrett, ,
Psychology, August 18, 2012

Imagination and the generation of new ideas, Rachel W. Magid, Mark Sheskin, Laura E. Schulz
Cognitive Development, Vol. 34, April – June 2015, pages 99-110.



Thank You!

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