An Investigation into the Potential of Horticultural and Nature-Based Interventions for Change

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Abstract
The majority of the planet’s inhabitants live in urban areas, and vulnerable populations are much more likely to live in urban environments with many barriers preventing wellness promotion (Africa et al., 2014). Marginalized communities are significantly more likely to have limited access to natural environments, leading to detrimental and life-threatening impacts on community wellbeing (Africa et al., 2014). Previous research has shown how horticultural therapy possesses the power to reduce stress and anxiety symptoms, bolster productivity, establish community connectedness, and promote resilience (Hall & Knuth, 2019). Horticultural therapy could include walks through nature or gardening to accomplish its powerful effects (Meredith et al., 2020). Although these findings about nature-based interventions are promising, there are still gaps in the literature researching horticultural therapy interventions. In addition, the horticultural therapy field lacks research about the evaluation of programs that utilize several disciplines to deliver multifaceted horticultural community programs. In the current study, a systematic literature review of horticultural interventions will assess the potential impacts of horticultural therapy and community interventions. Additionally, foundational and innovative measures will be gathered to evaluate the impact of a current Cook County program empowering
high school students. The literature will highlight how interdisciplinary horticultural programs
can be utilized to promote community change, and how these programs can be evaluated.

**Keywords:** horticultural therapy, health equity, and nature-based therapy

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An Investigation into the Potential Benefits of Green and Nature-Based Spaces and Evaluate Their Effects
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INTRODUCTION

• 50% of the planet’s populations live in urban environments, and this percentage is projected to increase due to the trend of urbanization.¹

• Many green and nature-based spaces are often disproportionately located in White neighborhoods with socioeconomic privilege.¹

• Living in urban areas with fewer green spaces has been linked to higher rates of mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Shanahan et al., 2019). Students represent a vulnerable group with more mental health issues than ever before with suicide and self-harm on the rise.²

• Marginalized communities in urban areas with fewer green spaces often are at higher risks for diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.¹

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Mental Health

• Nature exposure can reduce anxiety and depression.

  “Mental Health Benefits of Nature Exposure,” p. 1

• A study found that nature interventions can decrease stress and increase self-esteem.

  Self Esteem Improvement, p. 2

  "Self Esteem Improvement"
A literature review was conducted to evaluate the potential effects of horticultural interventions and gather measurements to evaluate a Cook County nature-based program for high school students in an urban and marginalized community.

References


