



**Alzheimer's Treatment | Alzheimer's Therapeutic Gardens**  
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## Alzheimer's Treatment Therapeutic Gardens



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### What are therapeutic gardens?

Therapeutic gardens, specially maintained gardening facilities that help people remain connected with nature, provide benefits for a wide variety of people who are ill or recovering from illness. They are used to help people recovering from surgery in healthcare facilities, for those who are undergoing physical rehabilitation and for individuals with Alzheimer's disease who are living in special care residences or who are living at home. Research indicates that physical as well as visual access to nature helps people recover from illness quicker, reduces stress and lowers blood pressure. Spending time outside helps a person maintain [circadian rhythms](#) (the sleep/wake cycle). There is also natural absorption of vitamin D when exposed to sunlight for brief periods of time, which is important for maintaining strong bones.

### Why are they important and what role do they play in treatment?

Access to outdoor environments, in specially designed gardens can be beneficial to the physical, social, psychological and spiritual health of a person. A therapeutic garden can provide exercise to a patient through normal activities such as planting, weeding, walking and bending. Many of the same activities that occur inside a residence can be continued outdoors. For example, having access to a putting green is a good activity for people who have played golf throughout their lives. Adding play equipment to a garden will give visitors something to do with the resident while they visit. These are elements of a garden that help a person stay connected to the world around them. Therefore, everyone who uses the garden will benefit.

How do therapeutic gardens benefit people with Alzheimer's?

Gardening and bird watching are very popular activities for people of all ages. Watching a brilliant sunset, smelling the fragrance of a lilac tree and listening to the sounds of water cascading in a fountain are all wonderful ways to excite the senses in a positive way. These activities are very important because they help a person remain connected to the world around them. It is important for a person with Alzheimer's to be able to continue enjoying outdoor activities they have done throughout their lives. (Note: this outdoor area must be safe and secure.) Often, we do not know how to reach a person with Alzheimer's disease, and creating environments that support their needs will help us better understand who they are.

### How do I find facilities with these gardens for my loved one?

Pictures in brochures can be misleading, so ask the staff of a facility if you can visit their community garden in order to determine whether a therapeutic garden has been created. The elements of a garden should include the following:

- Raised planters for people to use if they are in a wheelchair, walker or have other physical limitations;
- Bird feeders, birdhouses and birdbaths;
- Plant materials should be nontoxic and not harmful;
- Walks and paths should be smooth level surfaces that are glare-free;
- Private sitting areas should be located throughout the garden;
- The garden should be enclosed to prevent a person from wandering away; and
- Furniture should be sturdy and designed specifically for the needs of older adults.

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