



Master Gardeners Promote Therapy Through Horticulture

R.A. McNeilan and J. Powell

Plants, like people, are constantly growing and changing. The plant's caregiver waits for the first sprout, the first new leaf, or the first flower to emerge. By watching these tiny miracles, the caregiver starts to look toward the future with anticipation and hope. Each day the caregiver sees changes, and he or she has to adjust their care to meet the plant's constantly changing needs. The caregiver feels useful—and that's what makes a horticultural therapy program work.



you do things with, to, and for plants that affect their growth. Cultivated plants need people who can help the plants survive.

When the plant thrives, the person responsible for the plant's well-being also thrives.

Emotional, social, intellectual, and physical benefits have been observed that prove the rehabilitative value of gardening and plant care.

Personal successes emerging from a non-threatening, non-demanding

plant care project are the focal points of horticultural therapy.

Master Gardener volunteers, people who are skilled at growing and caring for plants, become the teachers who help others cope with life's difficulties through the love and care of plants. Master Gardeners, use their skills and knowledge of plant needs to help health care professionals develop an appropriate therapy program.

These skills, gained through experience and schooling, can stimulate a broader interest in the patient's surroundings and an increased knowledge of the plant world. Oregon's Master Gardener Program provides "educational programs in the areas of home horticulture, gardening . . . through trained and certified volunteer Master Gardeners."

The target audience is "Oregon citizens who have a need for home horticulture information." Horticulture therapy fulfills this purpose for people with special needs.

A Feeling of Usefulness

Horticultural therapy can help people with conditions ranging from mental fatigue to physical impairment. The Oregon Master Gardener Program is a valuable resource to help successfully start a horticultural therapy program.

Horticultural therapy involves the use of plants and horticulture science to achieve the following goals for the patient:

- improved self-esteem
- personal responsibility
- personal achievement
- motivation
- socialization
- self-expression
- relaxation
- sensory stimulation
- improvement of motor skills

Horticultural Therapy Brings Health

Horticultural gardening activities are adaptable to many needs. Plant care is action oriented:

Ray A. McNeilan, Extension agent and Oregon Master Gardener Program leader, and Jan Powell, education program assistant, Oregon Master Gardener Program, Oregon State University



MAKING GARDENING EASIER

Teachers and Students Benefit

Both the Master Gardener teachers and student-patients benefit from horticultural therapy activities.

The Master Gardener teaches skills, helps nurture relationships between plants and people, and gains satisfaction from encouraging achievement. Students learn they can transform their disabilities into abilities by caring for plants.

Horticultural therapy can be a simple, yet productive leisure activity, or it can be a way of developing vocational skills. Gardening's challenges provide:

- rehabilitation therapy
- a feeling of usefulness
- a chance to learn new, special skills
- a chance to socialize through the stimulus of plants.

Master Gardeners Help Therapy Programs Thrive

Using their knowledge of plant management and skills, Master Gardeners provide the teaching resources for a horticultural therapy program. Volunteers with the necessary plant skills who want to work with special populations, staff the program under the direction of Master Gardener program leaders. Volunteers could be asked to teach one-on-one, or they can serve professional therapists as knowledgeable plant resource people. The Oregon Master Gardener Program does its best to match the talents of each Master Gardener volunteer with the needs of a specific program.

For More Information

For more information on the Master Gardener Horticultural Therapy Program, write the Oregon State University Extension Service, Oregon Master Gardener Program, 211 S.E. 80th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97215.

Other titles available in the "Making Gardening Easier" set are:

Foster, S., Duvall, C., and Powell, J., *Adaptive Gardening Techniques for the Visually Impaired*. Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8498, (Corvallis, 1992).

Jewell, M., and Powell, J., *Gardening Hints for People with Arthritis*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8499 (Corvallis, 1992).

Throckmorton, E., and Powell, J., *Gardening Adaptations for People with Gripping and Lifting Problems*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8500 (Corvallis, 1992).

Foster, S., and Powell, J., *Gardening Strategies for People with Heart and Lung Problems*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8501 (Corvallis, 1992).

Foster, S., and Powell, J., *Gardening Ideas for Children with Special Needs*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8502 (Corvallis, 1992).

Throckmorton, E., and Powell, J., *Adapting Garden Tools to Overcome Physical Challenges*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8504 (Corvallis, 1992).

Rogers, P., and Powell, J., *Gardening with Limited Range of Motion*, Oregon State University Extension Service publication EM 8505 (Corvallis, 1992).

Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.



Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials—without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability—as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.