

NATURE'S WAY RESOURCES

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McWilliams YMCA's Grainger Garden is designed to attract, teach and delight children and to provide easy gardening for those with disabilities. From Dr. Novak's photo files

THE HOLISTIC GARDEN

by DR. JOE NOVAK

Garden is defined as a place where we grow vegetables, fruits, herbs and ornamental plants. But it is much more than that. As we grow our gardens, the process of gardening provides an aerobic workout. This results in prevention from or reduction of certain physical conditions, such as osteoporosis, heart attack, and colon cancer. A regular physical workout improves our long term health in many ways. Gardening is one of the two most common forms of physical activity for older adults.

Consuming fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs helps prevent or reduce the severity of many chronic conditions, such as cancers, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, high cholesterol, heart attack, depression, and viral infections.

The garden is a great place to interact with children. Gardens are nearby nature and contact with nature helps maintain the plasticity of the brain and enables it to develop in multidimensional ways. The garden is a special place to interact with children with autism, ADHD and other developmental disabilities. Garden programs can help change the life path of youth at risk.

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M. D. Anderson Cancer Center's Healthy Living Garden provides a nature-oriented site for much needed peace and contemplation and serves as a living library of vegetables that can help prevent cancer growing in gardens easily accessible to those with disabilities. From Dr. Novak's photo files

Gardens are restorative environments. They stimulate our parasympathetic nervous system and calm our sympathetic nervous system. This helps to free our minds for deep thought, enabling us to solve problems in our personal lives. It is a great tool to help unlock our creativity. Nature is fascinating and gardens are nearby nature.

Gardens are healing environments and can be found in many health care facilities. Gardens should be accessible to people who have disabilities so that they can get both active and passive enjoyment from them. Garden projects can be catalysts to rebuild troubled neighborhoods. The residents work together outdoors in a non-threatening environment and get to know one another. As a result they begin to take pride in their neighborhood and feel empowered to bring about changes. Crime decreases and property values increase. Holism is the concept in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The garden is a holistic environment in which many good things can happen. It can help improve our quality of life in many different, often unexpected, ways.

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Contact Dr. Joe Novak at novakgardener@gmail.com or drop by:

WED., FEB. 3: SOCIOHORTICULTURE: THE HOLISTIC GARDEN by DR. JOE NOVAK, 7pm, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Dr. Free. info101@nnmd.org

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