

# Elements of a Healing Garden

## Invigorate – 2026

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1. Elements of a Healing Garden
2. Edgerton (WI) Hospital and Health Services Healing Garden
  - a. Started in 2011
  - b. 3 acres (70-acre campus)
  - c. Front flower beds / café
  - d. Adjacent woodland trails (.5 miles) – Improvements!
  - e. Primarily volunteer maintained
  - f. Donor support
  - g. Active and passive use
  - h. Future improvements
3. examples
4. before and after
5. Wellness Garden, Rotary Botanical Gardens (RBG), Janesville, WI
6. examples
7. Why Bother?
  - a. Providing a user-centered, supportive environment
  - b. Relief from physical symptoms
  - c. Stress reduction is the major benefit motivating the use of healing gardens
  - d. Improvement in the overall sense of well-being for all visitors
  - e. Examples
8. Research Supports Benefits
  - a. Healing gardens improve health outcomes to the extent that they are effective in fostering restoration and coping with stress that accompanies illness and hospitalization
  - b. Active garden interaction has been shown to reduce depression
  - c. Not just an “amenity”
9. Contributions of the Garden
  - a. Sense of control
  - b. Access to privacy
  - c. Social support
  - d. Opportunities for physical movement and exercise
  - e. Therapy potential
  - f. Access to nature and other “positive distractions” (temporary escape)
10. Additional Benefits
  - a. Reduced provider costs
    - i. Fewer drugs
    - ii. Shortened length of stay
  - b. Higher patient satisfaction with the facility

- c. Increased job satisfaction, retention and efficiency
  - d. Recruitment tool
  - e. Community engagement
11. Patient Care and Commitment
- a. An attractive, well-designed and well-maintained healing environment reassures patients that they will be given an equally high level of attention and care
  - b. The entire campus should support this commitment to the health and well-being of all patients, staff and visitors
12. Positive Distractions
- a. Colorful plantings
  - b. Fresh air
  - c. Sounds of wildlife
  - d. Water features
  - e. Sensory engagement
  - f. Contemplation / respite
  - g. Other elements
  - h. Pollinator Hotel and Monarch Hatching Station
13. Rosecrance (Rockford, IL)
14. Planting Considerations
- a. Plant Care 101
  - b. Suitable plants – programming
  - c. Avoid poisonous, toxic or thorny options for visitor safety
  - d. Native selections
  - e. Seasonality
  - f. Maintain the view
  - g. Maintenance considerations
  - h. Examples
15. Pollinator-Friendly Setting
- a. Plant selection is integral to supporting this goal with heavy reliance on the best nectar/pollen producers (tried-and-true)
  - b. Chemical use policy
  - c. Visitor safety
  - d. Engagement
16. Monarch Hatching Station
17. Pollinator Hotel
18. Garden Art Project
- a. Four years
  - b. Community involvement
  - c. 25-50 thematic art pieces
  - d. Display (May – October)
  - e. Online auction
  - f. Fundraiser for Auxiliary (averaging \$1,500 income)

- g. Fun!
19. Sensory Engagement
- a. Visitors should enjoy a multitude of simultaneous, positive sensory experiences
  - b. Proximity to visitor
  - c. Fragrance focus
  - d. Seasonality
  - e. Maximize sounds of nature
  - f. Water features
  - g. Examples
20. Fragrant Plant! Sniff Me!
21. Rooms With a View
- a. Passive garden enjoyment has myriad benefits as well
  - b. Research has indicated that patients have a high preference for having a window view of nature
  - c. “Healing views” have a larger restorative effect on emotional, physiological and behavioral components of stress
  - d. Calming and centering
  - e. The “fishbowl effect”
  - f. Examples
22. Wayfinding and Access
- a. Easy to locate, access and open/close doors (automatic door openers)
  - b. Consider double doors
  - c. Easy garden walking scenarios can supplant traditional corridor sequences
  - d. Increased patient mobility and independence
  - e. Motivate engagement!
  - f. Examples
23. Accessibility Considerations
- a. Garden layout should foster maximum mobility
  - b. Design spaces that can be easy to utilize by the widest range of users
  - c. Raised beds, containers and other elevated garden situations
  - d. Don’t neglect to consider maintenance access
  - e. Examples
24. Buehler Enabling Garden (Chicago Botanic Garden)
25. Layout and Flow
- a. Design the gardens to include “positive trip destinations” that motivate increased walking and wheelchair movement
  - b. Loops! Avoid dead ends.
  - c. Support therapy activities
  - d. Consider “measured” routes or laps to support distance goals
  - e. Wayfinding to and throughout the garden as needed
  - f. Example

## 26. Path Considerations

- a. Path widths should ideally be 7'-8'
- b. Consider tinted concrete or other non-glare materials
- c. Consider all ambulation challenges and potential use scenarios
- d. ADA compliant
- e. Avoid "path crowding" with plants
- f. Example

## 27. Path Considerations

- a. Provide railings on even moderate slopes and ramps
- b. Path details should accommodate quick drainage and drying
- c. Consider robust edging with flower beds abutting paths to avoid washouts
- d. Night lighting
- e. Examples

## 28. Seating Locations / Benches

- a. Consider privacy
- b. Consider sunny and shady locations
- c. Bench materials
- d. Placement every 25'-50'
- e. Offset benches from main paths
- f. Bench pads should accommodate wheelchair too
- g. Benches should have backs and arms
- h. Examples

## 29. Seating Locations / Benches

- a. Benches situated in shade are important
- b. Bench locations, while providing privacy, should also allow for social interactions
- c. Moveable furniture options
- d. Proximity to raised beds and/or containers
- e. Bench care
- f. Examples

## 30. The Pavilion

## 31. The Arbor

## 32. Sense of Security

- a. The garden must convey a sense of security
- b. Visible layout
- c. Provisions for privacy but details that indicate garden observation and support
- d. Sight lines, staffing, cameras
- e. Memory care gardens have additional requirements
- f. Examples

## 33. Design Tips

- a. Design for the most vulnerable user

- b. Consider all “patient types” to be served by the space when considering the design
- c. Accessibility
- d. A general 70/30 ratio of vegetation to hardscaping is a good balance
- e. Utilize “borrowed scenery”

#### 34. Design Tips

- a. Avoid areas with intrusive noise or “negative distractions”
- b. Open lawn for gathering, activities, therapy and events
- c. Create “destination points”
- d. Consider night lighting
- e. Sufficient areas of shade are vital
- f. Ensure garden can be visually monitored by staff

#### 35. The Labyrinth

- a. History dating to 2000 B.C.
- b. Examples in many cultures
- c. Traversing a symbolic, spiritual journey to the center, rebirth, then travelling back out (symbolic cleansing)
- d. NOT a maze
- e. Many patterns, materials and settings
- f. Examples

#### 36. Maintenance Concerns

- a. Consistency and quality of care
- b. Budgetary fluctuations
- c. Volunteers!
- d. Service Days
- e. Additional revenue sources
- f. Foundation
- g. Memorials
- h. Donations
- i. Examples

#### 37. In a Nutshell

- a. While the “return on investment” might be hard to quantify, the research confirms that these purposefully designed, flexible-use, plant-dominated environments result in a reduction in stress for patients, visitors and staff and lead to measurable, positive health outcomes and higher satisfaction.
- b. EHHS Healing Garden

#### 38. Thank You!