



Healing Gardens

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I read with interest and some concern of Suellen's problems with the aged care facility in New South Wales. I have recently returned from a three and a half month stay in the United States with my family. In my spare time (of which there was plenty) I did some reading on Healing Gardens with an emphasis on aged care facilities. The thing that kicked off my interest was an article in the American magazine; "Landscape Architecture" on Therapeutic Landscapes in aged care. Teresia Hazen, a registered horticultural therapist and coordinator of therapeutic gardens and horticultural therapy for Legacy Health System in Portland, Oregon, was interviewed for the article. She emphasized the importance of a well thought out design with attention to small details to make the environment a comfortable and beautiful place for residents. She sites three examples where she lists good and bad points of the designs. One thing she talks about is a beautiful modern design that is wonderful to look at but not so pleasant to sit in! This is one example of her knowledge in a very interesting six page article (including pictures).

Some resources at the end of the article are:

- "*Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations*", by Clare Cooper Marcus and Marni Barnes, Wiley Series in Healthcare and Senior Living Design, 1999.
- [Therapeutic Landscape Data Base](#).

Another book I found interesting is "*Healing Gardens*" by Romy Rawlings.

If you google 'Healing Gardens' you come up with some interesting sites.

Some design guidelines suggested in the last book are:

- Provide a homelike environment
- Provide places for privacy (with sparse and low to medium screening for privacy)
- Provide sensory stimulation to increase mental alertness
- Provide opportunities for socializing (with shade!) Perhaps umbrellas can be used in the interim!
- Provide places to be with family
- Provide space for outdoor activities eg. bocce or bowls and grandchildren to play
- Pathways should contrast in colour with planting areas to help define the boundary between path and garden beds
- No dead ends; paths should be circular so they lead back to the starting point with visual reminders along the way such as small sculptures or birdbaths.
- Lots of seating both in socializing areas and along path ways
- Plants to give reminders of the change of seasons.

These are just a few ideas. The references go into far more detail. I understand Suellen has professional help now and that all the above guidelines would be taken care of. I'm happy for you to pass my email address on to Suellen as I have notes from Healing Gardens I can pass on to her. I am interested to see how the garden progresses. Aged care is a growing area which requires a lot of attention if we want our relatives to be cared for in a lovely environment, and gardens are one way of doing this.