

Raising Awareness of Children's Mental Health

Sensory Garden

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26th August 2024

WHY A SENSORY GARDEN?

My experience as a mother with a child with autism and ADHD:

- Neurodiversity and mental health issues require community support and understanding
- A calm green space can provide a safe environment for all children, siblings and parents/carers
- An unseen disability needs an understanding not judgement in a safe place
- A community space can provide a place to combat loneliness in all age groups
- A safe place can provide familiarity and comfort



PEACE GARDEN, FIONA MACLEOD

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- **Mental Health** Stress Reduction: Exposure to nature has been proven to lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. A peace garden offers a peaceful retreat facilitating mental relaxation
- **Physical Health**
- **Social and Community** Mood Enhancement: Gardens can improve mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Natural environments foster a sense of calm and tranquility
- **Environmental**
- **Educational Opportunities** Mindfulness and Meditation: Designated quiet zones and sensory gardens promote mindfulness practices, enhancing mental clarity and emotional resilience
- **Cultural and Aesthetic Value** Sensory Gardens: Plant selections based on textures, colours and fragrances to stimulate the senses

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- Mental Health
 - Physical Health
 - Social and Community
 - Environmental
 - Educational Opportunities
 - Cultural and Aesthetic Value
- Physical Health: Walking paths encourage gentle physical activity, which is essential for health and preventing chronic diseases
- Holistic Wellness: Integrating physical exercise with nature therapy offers a comprehensive approach to health, addressing both physical and mental wellbeing
- Growing vegetables: Community gardens provide access to fresh, locally grown vegetables, improving the overall diet of the community

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- Mental Health
 - Physical Health
 - **Social and Community**
 - Environmental
 - Educational Opportunities
 - Cultural and Aesthetic Value
- Social Interaction: Communal areas provide spaces for people to gather, strengthening social ties and a sense of belonging
- Community Engagement: The garden can host small events, fundraisers and volunteer activities
- Inclusive Space: A well-designed garden is accessible to people of all ages and abilities, promoting inclusivity and community cohesion
- Sensory Space: An inclusive area for everyone

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- Mental Health
 - Physical Health
 - Social and Community
 - Environmental
 - Educational Opportunities
 - Cultural and Aesthetic Value
- Supporting Biodiversity: Planting native species and creating pollinator gardens support local wildlife, contributing to the conservation of biodiversity
- Sustainable Practices: Utilizing sustainable gardening practices, such as rainwater harvesting and organic maintenance can set a positive example
- Climate Resilience: Green spaces mitigate urban heat effects, improve air quality and enhance resilience against climate change

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- Mental Health Kindness and social responsibility: Teaching kindness and remembering many people are less fortunate and may need extra support and understanding
- Physical Health Gardening Skills: Community members can learn valuable gardening and horticultural skills through hands on activities and demonstrations
- Social and Community
- Environmental Educating School Children: Learning how to look after and nurture things to watch them grow
- Educational Opportunities
- Cultural and Aesthetic Value A place to read: A social library for people to borrow or donate books allowing and encouraging the pleasure of escaping into a book

BENEFITS OF A SENSORY GARDEN

- Mental Health Cultural Heritage: The garden can incorporate elements that reflect the cultural heritage and diversity of the community, fostering a sense of pride and identity
- Physical Health
- Social and Community Aesthetic Enhancement: Beautifully landscaped gardens improve the visual appeal of the area, contributing to a positive community image
- Environmental
- Educational Opportunities
- Cultural and Aesthetic Value



PEACE GARDEN, FIONA MACLEOD

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- **Planning and Design** Collaborate with landscape architects and gardeners
- **Fundraising and Partnerships** Discuss ideas for decoration with Sensory Centre to ensure inclusivity within the community
- **Construction** Develop detailed design plans and budget
- **Launch and Programming**
- **Maintenance and Evaluation**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Planning and Design
Detailed budget required
- Fundraising and Partnerships
Seek sponsorship from local businesses that would benefit
- Construction
Donations from local businesses such as garden centres and builder's merchants for materials, plants and benches
- Launch and Programming
Develop detailed design plans
- Maintenance and Evaluation
Local Fundraising events

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Planning and Design To be planned and discussed
- Fundraising and Partnerships
- Construction
- Launch and Programming
- Maintenance and Evaluation

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Planning and Design Host an opening event to introduce the garden to the community
- Fundraising and Partnerships Charity involvement? Hidden sunflowers, autism, ADHD
- Construction
- Launch and Programming
- Maintenance and Evaluation

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Planning and Design
Develop a maintenance schedule with volunteer support
- Fundraising and Partnerships
Regularly evaluate the gardens impact on the community and make adjustments
- Construction
Library borrow chest – have a second-hand rainproof unit with books for all ages to borrow
- Launch and Programming
- Maintenance and Evaluation
Information board for local events, exercise classes, social groups
useful websites

Garden volunteers sign ups and suggestions going forward

SUMMARY

The sensory garden will be a valuable asset to the community, offering a place for relaxation and social connection, while promoting sustainability and education

It must raise awareness of mental and physical health needs by creating a space that nurtures both people and nature

A well-designed sensory garden provides a rich, multi-sensory experience that can be therapeutic and educational for visitors of all ages and abilities

With careful planning and community involvement, the garden can flourish into a much-loved haven