



STUDIO *Sprout*

STUDIO SPROUT, INC.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Hope Gardens at Cancer Centers

Landscapes for Strength

Therapeutic Goals for Hope Gardens

Patients

- Provide an emotionally supportive garden setting with positive nature views
- Incorporate unambiguously positive elements that are symbolic of life and re-growth
- Provide opportunities for socializing and as well as spaces to be alone
- Provide spaces for healing arts and creative expression such as art, creative writing, poetry, yoga, and meditative exercises
- Maintain a sense of safety and security in physical surroundings
- Include sensory plants and elements that help reduce stress; Focus on the visual and tactile
- Heighten awareness of nature, seasons, place, and time
- Create places for gentle low-energy exercise
- Maximize a sense of independence and control

Staff

- Create a pleasant work environment
- Provide desired amount of space for activities
- Maintain flexibility to adapt environment to changing needs
- Designate places for staff breaks and respite
- Provide ability to use space around the clock

Family and Visitors

- Assure that patients have quality care
- Provide a calm environment for socializing with private and comfortable spaces
- Offer opportunities for patients to feel a sense of normalcy through family/social activities



Therapeutic Gardens at Oncology Centers

In the past decade, cancer centers have implemented a philosophy of family-centered care to provide more comfortable and supportive environments for individuals receiving therapies [2]. Access to nature in a therapeutic garden setting can help soothe the mind, body, and spirit when coping with intense medical treatments and life-threatening illness. A “Hope Garden” is a safe and restorative outdoor environment where cancer patients, families, and caregivers can find emotional, social, and spiritual support.

Living with Cancer

Oncologists sometimes compare cancer cells to “weeds” that grow quickly and tend to come back if the entire “root” is not pulled. In order to “pull the root,” individuals with cancer often face a series of painful tests and intense therapies that can induce overwhelming emotional stress, anxiety, and fear. Practitioners administer radiation therapy and chemotherapy in sterile infusion rooms for sessions that can last several hours each day over a weekly or monthly treatment cycle. Highly toxic drugs compromise the immune system and cause severe side effects such as nausea, loss of appetite, hair loss, inability to concentrate, short-term memory loss, and fatigue [3]. The uncertain stages of cancer treatment burdens patients and their families with psychological and physical stress that can lead to a loss of selfhood, grief, depression, denial, anger, and emotional isolation [3]. A therapeutic outdoor space can help cancer patients, survivors, families, and caregivers regain a sense of control, meaning, and purpose.

Environmental Design Research on Cancer Patients Gardens

Several recent studies suggest that environmental intervention can have restorative benefits for those with life-threatening illnesses. In a study involving 157 women with newly diagnosed breast cancer, individuals were assigned 20-30 minutes/day of exposure to a natural setting, three weeks before and after surgery [1]. The intervention group showed greater recovery of the mental capacity to direct attention from pretreatment through the therapy period regardless of initial attention scores, health problems, symptom distress, and extent of surgery [1]. In another study, a two-year assessment of a Seattle horticultural therapy program for issues related to cancer indicated that focus groups repeatedly reported that being in a garden reduced stress and fostered relaxation [4]. Clients used therapeutic gardens for reading, writing, art projects, photography, dining, socializing, and relaxation. Client art, writing, and poetry often reflected personal observations on nature in a creative expression program [4]. Nature activities appeared to have benefits for attention fatigue and mental restoration.

Design Features for Hope Gardens

Hope Gardens emphasize restoration through calming views of nature, meditative outdoor settings, and places for socialization. Quiet and shady spaces help patients, families, and caregivers relax, think clearly, and approach difficult medical decisions. The simple garden layout welcomes discussion groups, intimate consultation, and private introspection. Covered structures and lush tree canopies provide ample shade to prevent sun and heat irritation caused by certain cancer drugs. Readily accessible water dispensers help clients maintain proper hydration. Seating with armrests and comfortable cushions invite relaxing breaks from fatigue and soreness. Tranquil water features and raised planting beds promote sensory interaction, attract wildlife, and provide positive distractions from pain and discomfort. Lush organic plantings that are safe to touch without risk of chemical exposure, cuts, or infection create a benign and supportive setting. The exclusion of heavily fragrant plants and smoking reduces the risk of nausea and maintains fresh air. Garden views from lobbies and infusion rooms provide calm to those waiting or receiving treatment inside the building. If a healing arts program exists, the garden should be conducive to creative expression, art therapy, music, low-energy exercise, children's activities, and other programs and events. A Hope Garden conveys growth and renewal and is a place where people can seek a quiet moment to read, cry, forget, and express their feelings.

An Integrated Philosophy

Hope Gardens are an extension of a cancer center's medical protocol under a mind-body-spirit approach to care. When designing the garden, the landscape architect works closely with staff and clients to understand the challenges that individuals face in coping with the effects of cancer treatment. Caregivers must make sure that garden visits are safe and appropriate for individual patients who might respond differently or be too uncomfortable according to treatment, physical ability, and emotional state. When integrated with a social support program, the garden can help clients explore the meaning of their lives, assist in helping them cope with treatment and post surgical challenges, and help them look forward as survivors.

[1] Cimprich, B. & D. Ronis (2003). "An Environmental Intervention to Restore Attention in Women With Newly Diagnosed Breast Cancer." *Cancer Nursing*, 26 (4): 284-292.

[2] Mallinger, J., J. Griggs & C. Shields (2005). "Patient-Centered Care and Breast Cancer Survivors' Satisfaction with Information." *Patient Education and Counseling*, 57 (3): 342-349.

[3] Taft, S. B. (2007-2008). "The Use of Therapeutic Horticulture in Cancer Support." *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 18: 45-57.

[4] Taft, S. B. (2004). "Therapeutic Horticulture for People Living with Cancer: The Healing Gardens Program at Cancer Lifeline in Seattle." *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 15: 17-23.

"She can't speak. So it helps her to recognize things, pick flowers, and feel the breeze."

- Patient, Jupiter Medical Center Garden of Hope



Imagine A Place...



STUDIO SPROUT, INC.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE & COMPLIMENTARY SERVICES

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