

# AHTA MAGAZINE

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## AHTA Magazine

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The American Horticultural Therapy Association Magazine

# Contents Spring 2021

Editor: Debra Edwards, HTR

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**Cover photo caption:** *A Heroic Gardens volunteer weeds the side fencing around Desert Storm Veteran Gemma's property in Roslyn, PA*

**Cover photo credit:** Collie Turner

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# Editor's Words

Photo Credit: Emily Littlejohn



**C**ollectively, as humans and therapeutic practitioners, we have had a challenging year, to say the least! It is easy for nurturing types of people to put others' needs before their own. But we must remember that we are allowed to make ourselves a priority in our own lives! In fact, self-care is ultimately the greatest method of giving to others,

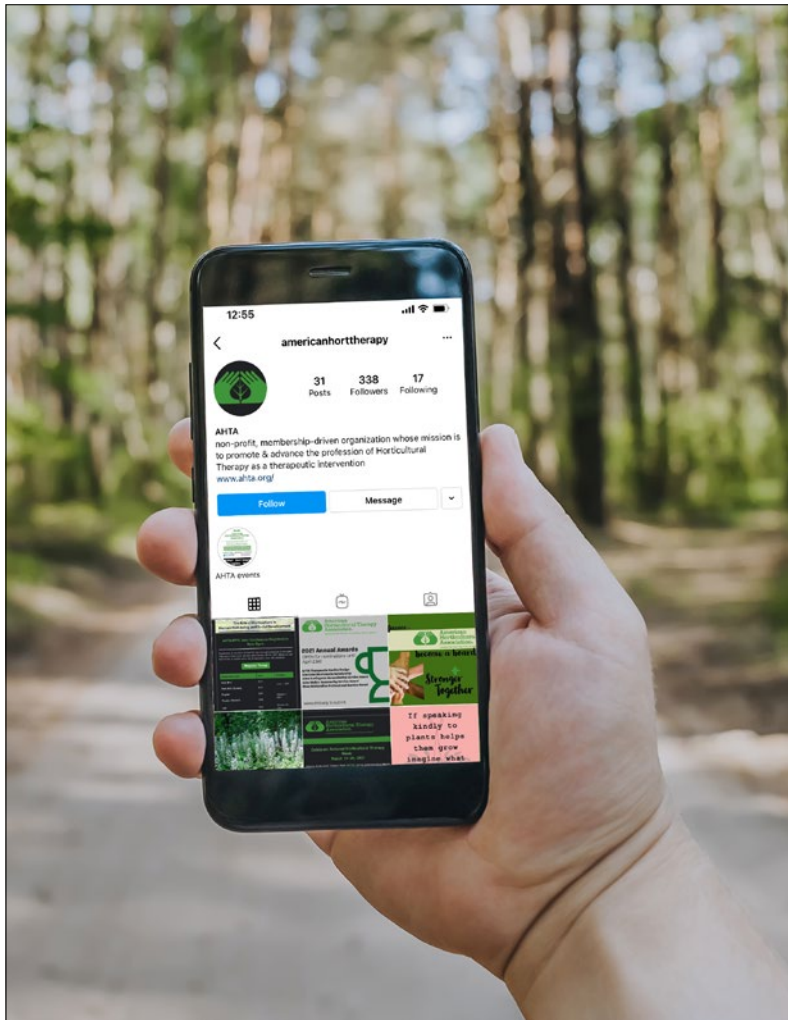
although this may sound ironic or counter intuitive. We cannot care for others if we are sick, we cannot volunteer our time if we are injured, and we cannot donate our money if we do not also care for our personal finances. Therefore, the nurturing caregiver or practitioner must remember self-care to continue to give to others.

Your own needs are just as important as those of others. Recognize your abilities and limitations and give yourself

grace if you make mistakes. So, take time for yourself, remind yourself of what is truly fulfilling for you and allow yourself to take breaks. Finding more joy in the things we do in life, and the need to rid ourselves of those extra burdens that are not fulfilling, seems to be the ultimate goal as we challenge the mundane tasks and daydream of better things. That is why this issue is dedicated to care for the caregiver, and focusing on self-care resources, tips, and examples. Allow yourself to rest, do something other than caring for others, and remind yourself that this is not selfish. This is necessary for you to continue to give back!

Yours in health,

Debra



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# Self-Care in a Time of COVID-19: Strategies to Avoid or Address Burnout

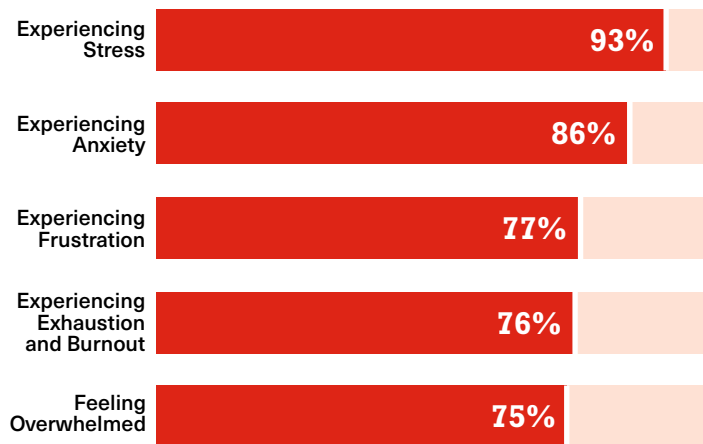
By Nicole Giron, MPH, HTR, CTRS

**I**t might come as no surprise that people all around the U.S. and World are tired. Tired of wearing masks, tired of not being able to see or hug loved ones, tired of chapped hands, tired of worrying about getting sick or paying bills, tired of staying home, tired of virtual meetings and sometimes just tired of being tired! Burnout is defined as state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

As we are now one whole year into the pandemic, a survey from Mental Health America (MHA), published in the December 2020 issue of Healthcare Finance magazine, sought to quantify the effect of the pandemic on the health care industry's workforce. The MHA hosted the survey to listen to the experiences of healthcare workers during COVID-19 and to create better resources to help support their mental health as they continue to provide care.

The responses collected from the 1,119 healthcare workers surveyed indicated they're stressed out and stretched too thin: 93% were experiencing stress, 86% reported experiencing anxiety, 77% reported frustration, 76% reported exhaustion and burnout, and 75% said they were overwhelmed.

## Mental Health America Survey The Effect of the Pandemic on the Healthcare Industry's Workforce



Source: Mental Health America (AHM) Survey, Healthcare Finance Magazine, December 2020

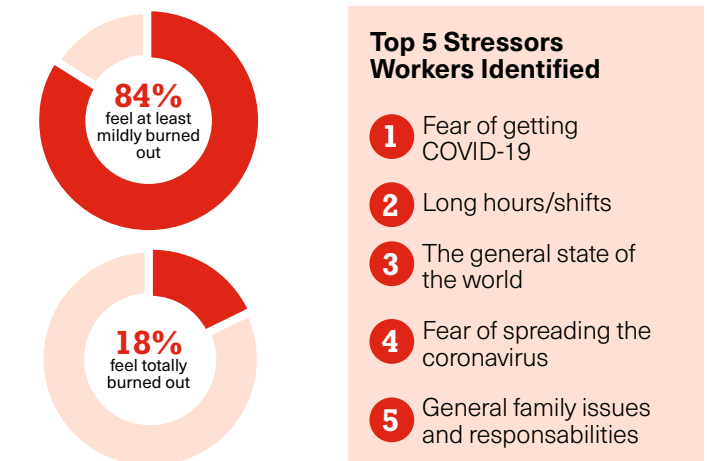
**Burnout is defined as state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.**

A second survey conducted by Berxi, a division of Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance and a provider of professional liability insurance for medical professionals, came to similar conclusions about the levels of stress and burnout reported by healthcare workers. A startling 84% reported feeling at least mildly burned out from work, and 18% feel totally burned out. The top five stressors that respondents identified, in order, were: fear of getting COVID-19, long hours/shifts, the general state of the world, fear of spreading the coronavirus, and family issues and responsibilities.

While horticultural therapists work in a variety of settings, many clinicians have likely experienced similar feelings this past year. You may also feel stressed, sad or anxious because your spring or summer plans for 2021 may be looking different during the continuing pandemic. With more and more people becoming eligible for vaccination everyday, there is hope on the horizon. With some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies this waiting period for a return to "normal". The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone!

Using plants and gardening practices as a healing modality for your own self care is a wonderful way to address burnout. As practitioners we frequently care for others and forget the

## Berxi Survey Levels of Stress and Burnout Reported by Healthcare Workers



Source: Berxi Survey

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Dimensions of Wellbeing  
Photo Credit: [www.growththroughflow.com](http://www.growththroughflow.com)

importance of caring for ourselves. Self-care describes a conscious act one takes to promote one’s own physical, mental, and emotional health. There are many forms self-care can take. It could be ensuring you get enough sleep every night or stepping outside for a few minutes for some fresh air during a busy day of zoom meetings.

Self-care is vital for building resilience toward those stressors in life that you cannot eliminate. It is important to assess how you’re caring for yourself in several different domains so you can ensure you’re caring for your mind, body, and spirit. Luckily for the horticulture therapy practitioner, we can use activities including plants and restorative practices in all the dimensions of wellbeing.

For example, the Physical domain includes how you are fueling your body, how much sleep you are getting or how much physical activity you are doing. From the horticultural therapy framework this might include harvesting herbs for an afternoon tea, digging vegetables from your garden to add to a meal, or pulling weeds and planting summer blooming bulbs. It could also include some water therapy and taking a hot bath with essential oils while reading the latest seed catalog.

If we have learned anything during the pandemic, it is just how vital close connections are to our wellbeing. The Social domain, while strained this past year, could be filled by visiting an arboretum or nursery masked up with a friend. Meeting outdoors, spaced apart in a park, will have the compounded effect of lowering stress hormone levels and improving your mood while working to sustain friendships. The AHTA workshops offered this past year were great ways to safely meet up with fellow HTR’s and share stories.

The Spiritual domain might include the Japanese practice of Shinrin yoku, or forest bathing, and experiencing a soulful reconnection with the earth. You could also simply bring a soft mat or beach towel to do some simple yoga positions in the park to quietly stretch and do breath-work to rejuvenate the body, mind and soul.

Depending on your current needs, you may need self-care in one domain over another. For example, if your occupation involves a lot of counseling or therapy work, you might need to emphasize your spiritual or physical domain. Do your best to recognize if one part of your life feels neglected, it might be time to try to plan for change. Adding one more thing to your “to do list” is not the goal here, but just bringing awareness to how self-care, even 5 minutes a day is vital for our wellbeing. I sometimes use just a dab of lavender and peppermint oil in my mask to breathe more deeply and clear my mind or use some scented geranium lotion on the back of my hands and massage my chapped knuckles. A favorite herbal tea to drink at work or a small \$5 bouquet for your desk can make a world of difference when you are feeling blue.



"Love Among Acorn Squash"  
Photo Credit: Nicole Giron

Luckily, the winter season is over, hope is on the horizon and soon we will be able to shed our tired and weary souls for spring has sprung! It is time to refresh and renew our homes and gardens and remember to care for ourselves just as ferociously as we do all who are in our care. 🌱

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# HTR Profile:

## Cheryl Jacobs, HTR



Cheryl Jacobs, HTR  
Photo Credit: David Jacobs

Interviewed by: Debra Edwards

### Bio

Cheryl L Jacobs, HTR has over 25 years in the horticulture profession and holds a B.S. in Agriculture, Major in Horticulture with a certificate in horticultural therapy from the Horticultural Therapy Institute accredited by the American Horticultural Therapy Association.

#### Tell us about your background and education—

I served 5 years active/1 year reserve, in the U.S. Air Force before getting out and graduating from the University of Arizona with a B.S. in Agriculture, Major in Horticulture. A few months after graduation, my husband and I moved to Iowa, where he is from, and I started a cut flower business. I grew fresh cut flowers for local flower shops. After moving to our current home, we put up a greenhouse and I started wholesale growing of annuals and vegetable starts.

#### How did you get started in horticultural therapy?

In February of 1996, I suffered an 8mm brain stem stroke. My work as a wholesale grower is what helped me rehabilitate. Around early 2016, I was having a conversation with the Chief of our Integrative Health department at the Veterans Affairs Hospital, where I volunteer. We were discussing a healing garden that was in works, and I was trying to figure out how my education could help other Veterans. I started researching



A therapy session  
Photo Credit: Cheryl Jacobs

horticulture and therapy and found HTI's website. I ended up going to Horticultural Therapy Institute for training to receive my certificate. My internship took place at that VA Hospital where I built an HT program during that time.

#### When did you become a horticultural therapist?

I received my certificate from HTI in December of 2017 and my credentials from AHTA in September of 2019.

#### How did you combine your interests within the horticultural therapy profession?

I like knowing how things work. I like knowing how I can make things easier for other people. Putting these together so that others can see and do things in the garden is everything to me. Horticulture, plants in general, brings its own interest. Just directing an individual's attention to the details that we tend to ignore in our busy lives changes their world. There is nothing better than watching someone who grew a tomato plant all summer, roll out to the patio and pick those tomatoes to enjoy. They will smile and put their face toward the sun. So, sharing the knowledge that I have in growing and helping others grow and become more productive is incredibly rewarding.

#### What has been your experience in developing a career in horticultural therapy?

My career in HT is very humbling- and frustrating. Working in a Federal hospital has its challenges. You need to have a LOT of patience. Not everything will move at the speed you like but working with other Veterans is fun. We have our own way of talking to each other and usually, I can get them to do something they might not want to do but will, because another Vet is asking. I also find myself doing a LOT of "homework". There are certain websites that are not accessible on the computer system at work, so I must do my reading and research at home. I do my activity writing at home also. Getting a program started is not easy. There is a lot of study, education, not only of yourself but of others around you, and then implementation with a bunch of eyes watching. It can be nerve wracking at times. In the end, it is all worth it to see everyone's face when they get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine.

#### Can you describe the steps you took and the resources you utilized throughout your career to develop HT programming?

I think one of the most important resources you have are the people around you. I am fortunate to have a group of Therapeutic Recreation and Occupational Therapy individuals that I can go to for questions. They helped me through my internship when I had issues or questions about a Veteran's situation. Also, life skills have come in very handy. The things I learned in college about growing plus the things I learned in the military have

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*Elevated garden bed on the patio*  
Photo Credit: Cheryl Jacobs

helped immensely. I also turn to my notebooks from school at Horticultural Therapy Institute (HTI). I read and read and read; books on design, writing notes, growing, plus I ask questions, A LOT of questions. I use the Veterans themselves. Really, just ask the people you are serving; they love to help. I also use Pinterest and watch videos from Garden Answer on Facebook. I would just say, start with your population, ask them what they want to learn, what they want to do. If people are engaged, they will have more interest and ownership in what they are doing. Really get to know your people and the organization you serve.

**How did horticultural therapy develop at your facility and what is the present status of this program?**

Horticultural therapy at our VA hospital started when I did my internship. Building the program during the winter months was a challenge. Here in the upper Midwest, patients pretty much stay indoors due to snow and ice, so you need come up with a lot of indoor activities. I installed a plant stand from Gardeners Supply to house our plants and started bringing in plants I thought would interest the Vets. Other Vets would bring in cuttings and those were turned into activities on propagation. We moved some of the herbs from the outside bed indoors to have more plants to care for. We grew flowers and even soybeans from seed since this is a farming area. At first, we used every windowsill we could in one of the dining rooms. During the summer months, participants take care of facility planters as well as their garden out back. I added 8-20" containers to grow tomatoes and peas. Everything must be accessible since many Veterans we treat in-house have mobility challenges. As far as the status of the program right



*Harvest day*  
Photo Credit: Cheryl Jacobs

now, it is in stasis. COVID-19 has brought things to a halt. Because I am technically back to Volunteer status, I cannot see patients on lock down and for this reason, we cannot do internships at this time either.

**Do you have personal perspectives to share with present or future horticultural therapist? Anything else you'd like to add?**

Being an HTR is so incredibly rewarding. Helping another human being to see the potential in life when they have lost that, is powerful. Learn and read everything you can in school. It will come in very handy later. Do not be afraid to ask those around you for help and direction. NETWORK. Do not be afraid to look silly, laughter helps people remember. Oh, and wear water resistant pants, you will not regret it, but most of all have fun! 🌱

# Celebrating National Horticultural Therapy Week 2021

By Erin Backus, CRC, HTR

This year NHTW was March 14th through March 20th. There were many across the country that celebrated the week via social media with the #NationalHTweek2021 hashtags in their posts.

**Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network (MHTN)** celebrated the week with the New York Botanical Garden 5th annual collaboration event. They hosted a special presentation by Sue Stuart Smith, author of *The Well-Gardened Mind*.

**The Northeast Horticultural Therapy Network (NEHTN)** kicked off the celebration with a social ZOOM gathering and a membership drive.

National Horticultural Therapy Week in **Puerto Rico** was celebrated by Perla Sofia in many ways, by conducting numerous interviews in Spanish on her weekly podcast "La verdure de hoy", promoting resources in Spanish for those interested in the field, and posting on her blog (in Spanish) at <https://agrochic.com/>.

In **California** Silvia Yoshimizu-Yee built a new raised bed with California native plants to promote NHTW and local biodiversity. Additionally, Tammy Black is starting a community garden at the **Manistique Community Treehouse Center** with her students and clients.

Please consider sharing stories and photos for our website by sending it to the AHTA office: [info@ahta.org](mailto:info@ahta.org) 🌿

# Restorative Programs for Healthcare Employees

By Shelagh Smith, HTR, MAEEC

All Photos: Shelagh Smith

Innovative healthcare organizations are offering garden and nature programming to reduce employee stress and burnout. As an HT practitioner, what role might you play?

Five types of nature-based programming are described here, with examples from three countries.

## Indoor Nature Immersion

At Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, 'recharge rooms' were first created in spring 2020 to give employees a break from the hospital environment. The rooms include comfy armchairs to sink into, a choice of nine nature videos shown on a wall-sized screen, corresponding soundtrack designed by music therapists, aromatherapy, and fake indoor plants.

Despite the lack of living nature, these rooms provide a restorative sense of nature immersion. "In a survey of about 500 visitors... self-reported stress dropped 60 percent after just 15 minutes in the rooms" (Elliot, 2020).

## Outdoor Nature Immersion

In Portland, Oregon, Legacy Health conducted research in 2018 to compare how nurse's stress and burnout were affected

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Figure 1: The Legacy Emmanuel garden





Figure 2: The Legacy Emmanuel garden

by taking breaks indoors in well-appointed break rooms, or outdoors in a well-designed garden (figure 1 & 2).

The result: “In short, taking work breaks in the Legacy Emanuel garden significantly reduced burnout in nurses working in high-stress environments” (Legacy Health, 2018).

### Supportive Encouragement to Take Nature Breaks

In a separate research project at Legacy Health, it became clear that direct supervisors play a critical role by supporting and encouraging their employees to take garden breaks. Educating supervisors can thus help employees to adopt healthier habits. (Nature Sacred, 2017).

In the UK, the National Health Service (NHS) conducted a year-long study at three hospital sites where staff were encouraged to spend time in green space during their workday.

Walking outdoors during a break was the most common activity. Employees reported benefits including “feeling relaxed and calm, refreshed and re-energized and positive effects on mental and physical wellbeing” (Newson et al., 2020).

### Volunteer Nature Care Opportunities

Broomfield Hospital, one of the three NHS sites, has improved several green spaces and gardens over the last few years with the volunteer help of staff and community members. Combining education with hands-on volunteering, this initiative is led by the hospital’s sustainability and grounds teams and widely publicized to engage hospital staff.

### Burnout Recovery Programming

At the Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden in Sweden, research was conducted from 2002 to 2012 to explore the efficacy of nature-based rehab for burnout recovery. Participants included healthcare professionals who had stopped working because of burnout. They had already completed a more traditional burnout rehab program that hadn’t resulted in a return to work.

The Alnarp program started with solitary quiet rest in the garden, followed in time by more active garden care. They found that a longer 24-week program resulted in 44% of participants returning to full-time work within a year, compared to their shorter programs which had lower (though still impressive) success rates (Grahn et al., 2017).

These five programming types have all proven successful in reducing symptoms of burnout and in re-energizing healthcare employees. Which aspects of these programs might you implement, or advocate for, at your work site? 🌿

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### About the Author

For 23 years, Shelagh Smith, HTR, MAEEC, designed and facilitated therapeutic horticulture programming for care home residents and for people with mental health challenges, collaborated on the design of therapeutic gardens, and taught budding horticultural therapists. Currently, she offers healthcare professionals an experiential online program to develop habits of noticing nearby nature for restorative self-care, as well as garden signage for sensory and enabling gardens. [www.ThriveWithNature.com](http://www.ThriveWithNature.com)

# The Wild Earth Preschool: Growing the Caretakers of our Future



*Laying the Groundwork*  
Photo Credit: Jessica Boysen

By Kathryn E. Grimes, MAT, HTR, CIG

“S hhhh...hold very still...see the bees legs? They have pollen sacks on them.” A small group of children spontaneously gathers around a patch of dandelions that have just emerged. They hold their breath and watch with rapt attention as the bees probe the dandelions for nectar. A staff member nearby takes a video to provide the children with a follow-up view and discussion.

Wild Earth Preschool taps into these spontaneous experiences in the environment to help our young children develop a strong nature identity for the mutual benefit of both the child and our future world. As a program of the Dallas Zoo, the preschool provides full-time licensed child care and quality education for children ages 3-5 years old. With a vision of creating a better world for animals, we recognize that animal, plant, and human life are interdependent, and many adults invested in caring for the environment can trace their interest to their childhood nature experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, these early experiences provide children the tools they need for a lifetime of well-being.<sup>2</sup> Each investigation begins



*Bee with Pollen*  
Photo Credit: Jessica Boysen

with a focus on a universal social or emotional concept, like “community”, “resilience,” “empathy,” or “gratitude.” We draw inspiration from the small creatures in our neighborhoods and backyards, like lizards, ladybugs, or songbirds, and further the exploration with loose parts, art, wildlife gardening, visits with diverse zoo animals, and conservation action, meeting the holistic developmental needs of the children.

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*What do you want to keep safe*  
Photo Credit: Kathryn Grimes

The children who attend Wild Earth Preschool are representative of typical populations of young children, and as such, the population is inclusive of children with characteristics of ADHD, Autism-spectrum disorders, anxiety disorders, and other concerns, whether or not they have been diagnosed. And, like most early childhood programs, we are seeing additional developmental needs in children as a result of the stress of COVID-19. Diagnoses in children this young are often difficult and avoided by health professionals unless essential for treatment, so laying a strong foundation for brain architecture is recommended for all children.<sup>3</sup> We lay that foundation by providing a balanced approach to development that includes nurturing relationships, physical health, emotional health, cognitive growth, and language development.

Wildlife gardening plays a primary role in our overall program design. Social and emotional goal-focused experiences are interwoven into the curriculum and teacher training. We offer the children both focused gardening activities and responsive, informal interactions with plants and animals.

Focused gardening-based activities are planned once a week, for 15-30 minutes per session, and universal social and emotional principles are integrated into projects. For example, when investigating community, we work with companion plants like potatoes and parsley, the latter of which hosts butterflies. When investigating renewal, we work with vermicomposting. When investigating resilience, we work with the tall spires of okra or red yucca, which provide supports for orb spiders.

In a recent investigation of safekeeping inspired by ducks and waterfowl, the preschoolers embarked on a multi-week project of building a native-forest terrarium. They began by making a collage of animals and natural features they value, and we investigated a

pitcher plant as an example of species that people protect. Next, the children dug soil from our forested area, then gently laid the drainage rocks, a layer of moss, and the soil to the terrarium. They explored moss and used a trowel as we discussed sustainable harvesting to collect favored common plants (aka: weeds) from the forested area where they play. Finally, the children added rocks, snail shells and other items of interest. All the while they practiced safekeeping skills like staying with the group, maintaining boundaries, and using gentle touches.

Throughout the week, the teaching staff observes the children bringing connections from these focused activities into their play and independent investigations. They verbally notice and acknowledge the children's discoveries, and scaffold them to the next level of understanding. They document growth in empathy, caring behaviors, and problem-solving among other objectives.

When parents see their children treasuring a fallen blossom or struggling worm, they know that we are growing the caregivers of our future and creating a better world for animals. 🌱



*Plants in hands*  
Photo Credit: Jessica Boysen

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# Heroic Gardens: Helping to heal the invisible wounds of war

All Photos: Collie Turner



Members of the Heroic Gardens team work to build a brand-new front landscape at the home of the family of a deceased US Army Chaplain.



By Collie Turner

Hundreds of thousands of Americans return from military service with emotional issues from the battlefield, sexual abuse, long deployments, and other causes. Military families also suffer their own traumas. But only a fraction ever seek formal treatment for their “invisible wounds.”

So, how are US soldiers being treated for something that cannot be seen beyond their visit to the VA? Our mission at Heroic Gardens is to facilitate healing by introducing veterans and their families to plants and nature. We help them learn to see how interacting with plants can be an integral part of their overall well-being.

We freely help veterans across the Delaware Valley in several ways:

- **Transforming their landscapes.** Whether it is a family backyard, planters on the patio, or just a window box, we provide free assistance to helping veterans and their families realize an outdoor space to bring them peace and tranquility. We often witness personal transformations in their attitudes and actions, and spillover improvements to the neighborhood.
- **Restoring veteran community parks.** Working with local entities, we help them reclaim the park's intention

of honoring those who served. Rejuvenated parks also bring social, economic, and health benefits to the whole community.

- **Providing free in-person and virtual social horticulture classes.** When the pandemic hit, we launched Mission Windowsill, classes by videoconference, to broaden the reach of those classes. Now, it only takes a smartphone, tablet, or laptop to get growing. From house plants to orchid care to dried flower wreaths, our veterans are learning to garden in the safety of their own homes. Every two weeks, veterans receive a hand-delivered kit containing all the supplies needed for the activity. We then meet via Zoom, with a registered horticultural therapist guiding the group through the project, socializing as they learn.

We noticed that as time went by, social barriers dissipated as veterans joked, and offered advice and support to their fellow gardeners. We received numerous emails with questions and feedback, not just from class members but from others in the building curious to learn more about the program! In 2020, our veterans grew mung beans and marigolds, pothos and spider plants and created dried wreath arrangements and winter centerpieces to fill their homes with warmth.

We are always looking for volunteers and donors as our organization continues to expand beyond the Delaware Valley. Visit us at [www.heroicgardens.org](http://www.heroicgardens.org). We'd love to meet you! 🌱



A customized kit for Mission: Windowsill. Registered veterans receive customized kits delivered to their home containing plant-based elements needed to complete a virtual activity with an HTR.

# 2020/2021 AHTA-IPPC Virtual Webinar Series. A review of webinars 3 and 4

By Laura Rumpf, HTR

The AHTA and the International People Plant Council (IPPC) concluded their free webinar series entitled, “Understanding Horticulture for Health and Well-being” in January and February 2021.

The webinar, “What About the Research Evidence?” presented the importance of research and how it determines which horticultural therapy (HT) activities result in targeted outcomes.

Dr. Candice Shoemaker discussed systemic reviews, including meta-analysis, of gardening health benefits. She illustrated the growing body of research in the HT field, considerably of higher quality than previously.

Dr. Sin-Ae Park introduced Korean studies that analyze horticulture activities. Three types of responses were presented: physical, psycho-physiological, and effectual. “When efforts are made to increase the professionalism of HT by applying evidence-based research, the industry expands and is further recognized,” she stated.

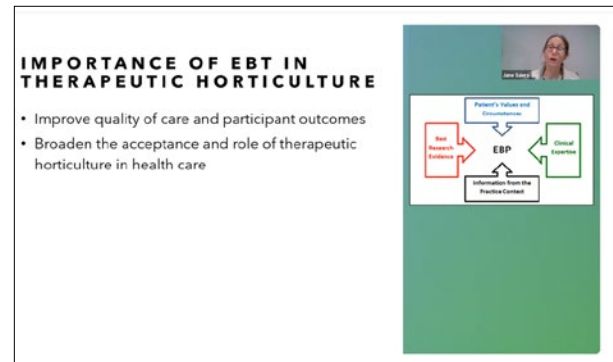
Dr. Diane Relf demonstrated the analogy that a mountain is being built on overlapping levels of information. Those levels need to be understood. The mountain’s underlying principle, or base, is that plants are the key to human survival. Then come, Biophilia: The deep affinity humans have for life and living systems, Hortophilia: the desire to interact with, manage, and tend to nature, Hortophilia & Healthcare: the therapeutic and rehabilitative applications of horticulture, and lastly, Horticultural Therapy: an actual healthcare practice.



Dr. Relf posits that, to further horticulture as a therapeutic tool, we must understand it from an evidence-based practice. The professional expertise that the practitioner can provide

informs and solidifies HT as a practice. Dr. Relf identified HT/TH associations and organizations worldwide and is soliciting research from them in order to share valuable information.

In the final webinar entitled, Evidence Based Practice (EBP) in Horticultural Therapeutic Interventions, Dr. Jane Saiers, HTR, PhD outlined the fundamental steps of EBP: Assess, Ask, Acquire, Appraise, Apply, and Audit.



Dr. Derrick Stowell and Matthew Wichrowski demonstrated these stages in their work of serving veterans and cardiopulmonary rehabilitation patients (respectively) in the following ways:

**Assess** (a clinical decision is required). Look at literature that can inform the practitioner of the challenges and needs of the population served. **Ask** (convert information needed into an answerable clinical question). Research successful and unsuccessful HT programs. **Acquire** (seek best evidence). Look at peer-reviewed journals on current and past programs. Visit sites. Seek collaborators. **Appraise** (critically appraise the evidence for validity, impact and applicability). **Apply** (integrate evidence into clinical decision making). Involve a focus group from the targeted population. Build in and utilize data collection. Mesh HT goals with the treatment team’s goals and medical scales. This will help horticultural therapists be regarded as valued team members. **Audit** (evaluate steps and seek ways to improve). Observe progress of the session. Assess collected data and adjust to improve program outcomes.

Dr. Saiers concluded the webinar stating that research of People And Plants is burgeoning. The benefits of HT are just beginning to be assessed and quantified in a way that can contribute significantly to scientific literature.

Recordings of the full webinar series may be viewed by going to: <https://internationalpeopleplantsymposium.org/webinars/>

# MEMBER UPDATES

## 2021 AHTA/IPPS Joint Conference update

As was the case for so many events scheduled to be held last year, the 2020 AHTA/IPPS Joint Conference, a collaboration of the American Horticultural Therapy Association, the International People Plant Council, and the International Society for Horticultural Sciences, was postponed until 2021. This conference will be held in a virtual format from October 29-30, 2021. It encompasses the 15th International People Plant Symposium, the 48th American Horticultural Therapy Association Annual Conference, and the 2nd International Symposium on Horticultural Therapies.

The theme of the conference entitled, *The Role of Horticulture in Human Well-being and Social Development*, will consist of five topics: *Theoretical Frameworks for Research; Horticulture and the Individual; Horticulture and the Community; Working together to advance the application of horticulture to human well-being; and The Application of research on horticulture and human well-being for improving life quality.*

Keynote Speakers include Sin-Ae Park from South Korea who will present *Theory and Constructs of Using Horticulture for Health and Well-being*, and Anna María Pálsdóttir from Sweden, speaking on *Horticulture Programs for Health and Well-being at the Alnarp Rehabilitation Garden*.

Invited speakers will be Matthew J. Wichrowski, Leah Diehl, and Diane Relf.

The purpose of this symposium is to provide a forum for researchers, educators and practitioners to continue to discuss, identify, encourage and expand the research used by professional and trade associations to clearly demonstrate the benefits of horticulture in wellness and quality of life. This research facilitates the expansion of programs in diverse areas from urban planning to healthcare.

The program, still being finalized at the time of this writing, is expected to include two days of live presentations by invited speakers and Q&A, consecutive recorded oral presentations with live Q&A, poster presentations, and community workshops. Additionally, pre-recorded tours of HT/TH programs from across the globe will be on-view via an AHTA conference-specific YouTube channel.

The pre-recorded presentations and virtual tours will be available for conference registrants to view one month prior to the event. Questions for the Q&A portion of the conference may be submitted during this time.

An attendee's registration will be their access to the program located on the Whova app and to the links to all sessions. The symposium content located on the app, will be available to registered attendees only. A program e-booklet and abstract e-booklet will be available for download. Symposium content will be accessible for six months after the conclusion of the event on the Whova platform.

On Thursday, October 28th, the IPPS business meeting and the AHTA membership business meeting and awards ceremony will take place. Other possible events, such as an international associations poster presentation, small group discussions, and Q&A with virtual tour leaders are being discussed.

Although we would much prefer to meet with one another in person, the 2021 AHTA/IPPS Joint Conference Organizing Committee is confident that it will be an exceptional event, worthy of celebration virtually.

For more information on the 2021 AHTA/IPPS Joint Conference please visit: <http://ipps2020.org/> 🌿



Sign Up

**Register as a sponsor for the joint International People Plant, AHTA, ISHS Symposium and give your organization great visibility and recognition!**

Building on the past success, the Symposium and AHTA Conference is expected to attract 350 participants in 2021, including researchers, students, professionals in horticultural therapy programs and facilities, and from varying horticultural areas including arboreta, landscape designers, horticulture associations and members of the horticulture industry from North America and the world.

Sponsorship levels range from Diamond to Bronze with various levels of benefits and visibility to fit any organization.

**Additional information here:**

<https://internationalpeopleplantsymposium.org/sponsorship/>

# EDUCATION & TRAINING

## University of Tennessee Gardens Horticultural Therapy Program

In 2012, the University of Tennessee Gardens (UTG) began offering horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture programs to the community. Programs were offered at the gardens and on-site at assisted living and memory care facilities in the Knoxville area. Since 2012, we have been able to serve over 7,000 participants and 2,100 healthcare professionals through our programs. All the activities are designed to address the mental and physical needs of the residents. Many of the activities used plants that provided sensory stimulation such as smell, touch, and texture. The residents enjoyed reminiscing about their own gardens, or their parents' gardens.

Other programs were offered at the UTG to help students who have disabilities. One partnership that we have developed is with Tennessee School for the Deaf's Comprehensive Adult Program. Students were brought to the UTG once a week and enjoyed working in the garden. The activities were designed to teach marketable skills to these very capable young people. Activities included mulching, weeding, potting up plants, washing pots in the greenhouse, planting vegetables in the teaching garden, and much more.

Other groups served were from behavioral health organizations and veteran's groups. Clients from Cherokee Mental Health would visit the UTG once per month for a relaxing walk followed by a program that addressed specific behavioral goals. For example, learning how to care for a plant was used as a metaphor for caring for oneself. Taking the time to observe one's body and feelings and knowing how to manage stress were some topics covered.

Staff at the UTG also provide consulting to local organizations on therapeutic garden design. Working with the University of Tennessee's FUTURE program, UTG provides hands-on experiences for students with intellectual disabilities. Students who complete the two-year nonresidential program gain access to college classes they may not otherwise have access to because they did not meet the entrance requirements.

Providing internship experiences is a big part of the program at UTG. Each semester, one to three students in Therapeutic Recreation are supervised by Dr. Derrick Stowell to complete their education. The students learn about gardening, horticulture, creating meaningful activities, and they learn how to work with people with dementia.



*Therapeutic Recreation interns, Nabreyah and Hanna work with Chase in our horticultural therapy vocational program.*

Photo Credit: University of Tennessee Gardens

Moving forward, the UTG Horticultural Therapy Education team is working on an online certificate program! The program will be offered through the University of Tennessee and will provide nine hours of college credit that will count toward becoming a Horticultural Therapist Registered through AHTA. The goal is to help more people becoming educated about horticultural therapy and its many benefits to a wide array of populations.

For more information about UT Gardens programs contact Dr. Derrick Stowell at [dstowell@utk.edu](mailto:dstowell@utk.edu) or 865-974-7151, <https://utgardens.tennessee.edu>. 🌱

# EDUCATION & TRAINING

## Seamless Delivery Performed Virtually



*"While the transition to online classes was necessary this past year, hands on class activities during face-to-face learning was always a student favorite."*  
Photo Credit: Christine Capra

By Christine Capra, Program Manager, HT Institute

A year ago, the Horticultural Therapy Institute moved all certificate classes online because of the pandemic. The Herculean task was achieved with the strong commitment and passion of dedicated instructors and staff, resulting in 38 students receiving their Certificates of Completion and 90 students beginning the program in the fall of 2020. After conducting the first two classes online last April and May, instructors learned how to offer this engagement in an online format and discovered some unique advantages, as well as new ways to deliver the same quality content for which the Institute is known. The goal remains to provide a reliable and consistent experience for students, no matter what format is used.

According to recent graduate Kelly Warnick, a greenhouse

professional in Illinois, "I am grateful for the online learning option because COVID could have delayed my progress through the certificate program another year. I am amazed at the amount of content that was seamlessly delivered through the courses that had to be performed virtually."

As with any educational program, there are pros and cons to both face-to-face learning and online learning. For pediatric occupational therapist Jenny Peet, from Tennessee, "Taking online courses allowed me to really focus on learning the material and fitting it into my busy life."

Student and HTI graduate Marcia Lilley of North Carolina said: "Through the online classes offered by HTI, I was able to complete the last two required courses for my HT certificate. While it was not possible to have in-person classes, the HTI team worked hard to create opportunities for students to connect and interact with the instructors and other students."

While much remains uncertain in the world, the HT Institute hopes to combine the best of both styles of class delivery by offering some face-to-face and some online classes beginning in the fall of 2021. Preparing students for a career in horticultural therapy is paramount. According to Lilley, "The HTI classes taught me all aspects of horticultural therapy, from theory and programs to application. I found the assignments to be carefully designed so that I now have practical takeaways to launch my work in the field."

In a similar manner, Warnick said the classes prepared her to have a 360-degree view of the horticultural therapy discipline. "I have learned that HT is such a multi-disciplinary profession, and that it requires skill and proficiency in horticulture, human services, and even business management and marketing. Each course in the series pulled in an effective amount of training in these additional areas."

After nearly 20 years of offering horticultural therapy education, the HT Institute continues to evolve and keep its curriculum fresh and relevant. Teaching adult learners how to make the leap from their current careers to one involving horticultural therapy remains a passion for everyone at the Institute.

"This career is often not a straight-forward job where you just respond to an open-position posting," Peet said. "It takes some nuance to figure out how to incorporate all your strengths and knowledge to bring them to an organization. I would not have had the knowledge or confidence to do that before taking these classes." 🌱



# EDUCATION & TRAINING

## Enhance Your Training With The New York Botanical Garden's Horticultural Therapy Certificate Program

The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is proud to offer a comprehensive Horticultural Therapy Certificate program in the tri-state area. This program equips students with the therapeutic skills and horticultural techniques needed to serve a broad population of people in need.

The NYBG trains students to confidently design, implement, and operate individual and group-based programs of all sizes. June Hesler, who graduated from NYBG with a Horticultural Therapy Certificate, said of the program: "Thinking of perhaps a second career, I enrolled in NYBG's horticultural therapy courses. I loved that the instructors were practitioners in the field. The assignments were stimulating, challenging, and pulled everything together. I am excited about the many opportunities to apply what I've learned in this program."

The certificate program consists of 12 comprehensive courses and a 100-hour internship. Each Horticultural Therapy course is interactive and taught by highly qualified, practicing professionals who are either Horticultural Therapy Masters (HTM) or Registered Horticultural Therapists (HTR). Students explore the characteristics and etiologies of various populations who can benefit from horticultural therapy, including youth with disabilities, older adults, and those with behavioral health or physical rehabilitation needs. Instructors focus on fundamental skills such as goal setting, activity planning, risk management, proposal and budget development, evaluation methods, plant selection, and accessible design.

Over the past challenging year, NYBG's dedicated instructors successfully shifted gears to online learning. Program Coordinator Phyllis D'Amico, HTM, shared this about the transition: "Virtual teaching has been a welcome challenge for our team. The learning experience remains rich and dynamic for our students as we navigate innovative approaches and creative ideas together."

The NYBG instructors have found that horticulture as a therapeutic medium can be effectively conveyed within online classrooms. "I have always emphasized with students in my Introduction to Horticultural Therapy course that one of the critical components of an effective horticultural therapy intervention is the therapist's ability to adapt to the specific needs of the client



*Horticultural Therapy Certificate student develops plant-selecting skills while exploring NYBG's gardens.*

Photo Credit: The New York Botanical Garden

whom they serve at a moment's notice," said Program Advisor Anne Meore, HTR.

She added: "I've discovered this capacity to adapt truer than ever as I committed to adjusting my teaching style to accommodate students' needs in the virtual classroom. It is the sharing of wisdom and experience that's truly been the greatest silver lining of teaching during this pandemic, and with it the shared commonality of the human experience as we rise up courageously to move forward in the face of global challenge."

With the recent launch of the Spring-Summer 2021 course catalog, NYBG offers a full slate of online Certificate-level classes taught by industry experts, including Phyllis D'Amico, HTM; Anne Meore, HTR; Abby Jaroslow, HTR; Kathy Brechner, HTR; Matt Wichrowski, HTR; Pat Czarnecki, HTR; and Nancy Minich, HTR.

To become a part of our community, please visit The New York Botanical Garden online at [nybg.org/adulted](https://nybg.org/adulted) to learn more. 🌿

# EDUCATION & TRAINING

## Rutgers University Green Industry Vocational Skills Training Internship

The Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences Horticultural Therapy Certificate Program is pleased to announce a new paid horticultural therapy internship to students who are enrolled in college and university based educational programs and are pursuing professional registration with the American Horticultural Therapy Association. This horticultural therapy internship experience will provide horticultural therapy students in training with the skills necessary in providing career and technical green industry education to individuals with autism spectrum disorder who are seeking competitive employment in the community. Student participants in this program will learn techniques to provide vocational services aligned with the state-federal vocational rehabilitation system. This multi-year project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture Higher Education Challenge (HEC) Grants Program.

To be eligible for this internship experience the applicant must:

- Be currently enrolled as a matriculating student at a college or university in the United States in any area of study.
- Completed at least 6 semester credits (or equivalent) of horticultural therapy coursework
- Be available to attend one of two internship sessions

- Enroll in the 11:776:427 Vocational Skills in Horticultural Therapy Internship course as a visiting student if not a current Rutgers student
- Relocate to New Brunswick, NJ or surrounding areas for the entirety of the internship experience
- Be willing to participate in related scholarly activities upon completion of the internship, including contributions to research papers, participation in conference presentations, etc.
- Agree to adhere to the established Rutgers University COVID-19 precautions

To find more information about the internship, please contact Gary Altman, CRC, HTR at [gla32@sebs.rutgers.edu](mailto:gla32@sebs.rutgers.edu) or visit the Rutgers SEBS Horticultural Therapy website at:

<https://plantbiology.rutgers.edu/hort-therapy/internship-program/> 🌿



## Soothing Scents for Self-care

By Karen Kennedy

Caregivers as well as clients benefit from a “tool bag” filled with strategies to help relieve stress and tension and rejuvenate the spirit especially as pandemic protocols continue. Gardening, flower arranging and walking in green spaces are wonderful respite activities. But how else can we, as horticultural therapists, help co-workers as well as clients?

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the garden is fragrance. The sense of smell is closely tied to our limbic system and can have a powerful impact on feelings of well-being. The fragrance of herbs such as lavender has a well-known association with relaxation and stress relief. Lavender also has a long history of having skin soothing properties, is a sleep aid, and can even relieve headaches. This favorite garden herb is now easily found in all sorts of self-care products from shampoo to body lotions.

To have a bit of lavender to carry beyond the garden, try lavender infused oil. See below for directions on how to make a roll-on herbal oil blend. This portable project is a wonderful treat to add to a self-care strategy and quite literally, add to one’s tool bag (purse, backpack or pocket)! Especially as we all grow weary of wearing a mask for many hours, putting some on the edge of your mask or on the bridge of your nose will give access to the fragrance where it is needed the most.

Author Janice Cox, in her workbook Beautiful Lavender, A Guide and Workbook for Growing, Using, and Enjoying Lavender shares the following recipe for making roll-on lavender infused oils. This project may be appropriate for some client groups to make and as a quick project for staff wellness events.

### To make one Roll-on Lavender Bottle:

- 1 to 2 teaspoons almond, jojoba, argan, avocado, olive or grapeseed oil

➔ [continues on next page](#)

# BOOK REVIEW

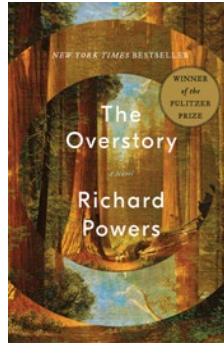
## The Overstory

Author: Richard Powers

Review by Linda Brown-Kuhn

If you are a fan of trees, a likelihood among horticultural therapists, reading *The Overstory* will elevate your appreciation of all the amazing properties of trees. This Pulitzer winning novel, the 12th book written by gifted writer Richard Powers, even changed his life. During the writing of the novel he moved from California to the Great Smoky National Park area to be close to old growth forests.

And though virgin forests are featured prominently, the novel takes the reader on an epic journey that starts with the seemingly separate stories of nine people. Powers shows how these people connect with trees in powerful and lyrical prose that also demonstrates his knowledge of plant life. For instance, he writes about the beech tree here: "Strong and wide but full of grace, flaring out nobly at the base, into its own plinth. Generous with nuts that feed all comers. Its smooth, white-gray trunk more like stone than wood. The parchment-colored leaves riding out the winter *-marcescent* he tells her—shining out against the



neighboring bare hardwoods. Elegant with sturdy boughs so much like human arms, lifting upward at the tips like hands proffering. Hazy and pale in spring, but in autumn its flat, wide sprays bathe the air in gold."

Fittingly, the book is divided into four sections: roots, trunk, crown, and seeds. The plot twists and turns, requiring the reader's full attention. But the reward is stunningly memorable passages and a pressing theme that forces the reader to rethink humans' relationship with trees and vice versa. We need trees but trees do not need us.

The character nicknamed Plant-Patty, who is a plant biologist, understands the true worth of trees from their tops to their roots. "Love for trees pours out of her -- the grace of them, their supple experimentation, the constant variety and surprise. These slow, deliberate creatures with their elaborate vocabularies, each distinctive, shaping each other, breeding birds, sinking carbon, purifying water, filtering poisons from the ground, stabilizing the microclimate." This is a book that you will not forget. 🌿



Infused oils in a roll-on bottle.  
Photo Credit: Janice Cox

- ¼ teaspoon dried lavender buds
- 1 to 2 drops lavender essential oil
- 1-ounce glass roller bottle
- Add dried herbs to bottle. Top with oils and secure the top.
- To use, roll a small amount behind your ears, on your wrists, temples or even on the edge of your face mask. Inhale and let the lavender aroma soothe your spirit.

Experiment with other herb combinations such as:

- Relaxing blend – lavender, chamomile, and cinnamon bark pieces
- Energizing blend – lavender, dried citrus peel, and mint
- Refreshing blend – lavender, eucalyptus and cedar

Note: use only dried plants when making scented oils. Adding a couple drops of vitamin E oil will act as a natural preservative, making the oil blends last longer. 🌿

### Resources

Beautiful Lavender, A Guide and Workbook for Growing, Using, and Enjoying Lavender can be purchased here: <https://www.naturalbeautyathome.com/natural-beauty-books>

Roll-on bottles are available at health food stores, Mountain Rose Herbs and Amazon

### About the Author

Karen L. Kennedy, HTR is the Education Coordinator at The Herb Society of America and a horticultural therapist with over 30 years' experience. As a private contractor, she serves older adults, children, and people touched by cancer. She is also a faculty member of the Horticultural Therapy Institute.

# MEMBER BENEFITS

## AHTA Members Receive A 25% Discount at Gardener's Supply

AHTA members receive 25% off their orders from Gardener's Supply using the code found on the Members Welcome Page of the AHTA website.



**MAGAZINE SUBMISSION DATE:**  
July 19, 2021

We are always looking for fresh voices to be heard in the *AHTA Magazine* so send us your stories by submitting them [here](#).

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