

## Working with Nature n Nursing. Sarah Howes, RMN, PhD.

For the Complementary Therapy Nurses' Interest Group (CTNIG), the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO)

**Definition of a nurse:** A registered nurse must support the provision of ‘safe, sustainable environments’, recognising the ‘interconnectedness of environmental, personal, and public health’ (International Council of Nurses, 2025, pp 12-13).

### Some steps which you can take in your own work and practice:

- Breaks and activities in nature may help to reduce the risk of burnout and increase staff wellbeing: can you make spaces for micro-restorative breaks in your own work setting?
- Create outdoor or nature themed indoor spaces for staff and patients.
- Consider access to the use of photography, art work, poetry and natural objects or plants in clinical and academic settings.
- Can you provide natural sound recordings or VR experiences for patients?
- Be conscious of risks, safety plans, and concerns specific to your local environment.
- Review local sustainability policies – be aware of the impact of healthcare practice on the environment and whole systems health, actively contributing to local change.
- Consider how awareness of planetary health currently influences your work, or how you could enhance this in the future.
- There are a number of theories, frameworks and guidelines which can support us to think about nature inclusion in our practice (clinical and academic) and help to justify change. See the chart below to help get you started.
- Action and hope - Small steps can have big impacts!

Useful Theories and Approaches	Useful Frameworks and Charters
<b>Attention Restoration Theory</b> (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989)	Planetary Health Education Framework (Guzmán et al. 2021a)
<b>Stress Recovery Theory</b> (Ulrich et al, 1991).	Geneva Charter for Wellbeing (2021) Builds on the Ottawa Charter (1986)
<b>Biophilia</b> (Wilson, 1984)	Sustainable Development Goals (World Health Organisation, 2015)
<b>Ecopsychology</b> (Roszak, 1995)	Framework for Education for Sustainable Development (Advance HE, 2025).
<b>Ecotherapy</b> (Jordan & Hinds, 2016; Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009).	Designing a net zero map for healthcare (Healthcare Without Harm, 2022).