

AHTA

MAGAZINE

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AHTA Magazine

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FALL 2024

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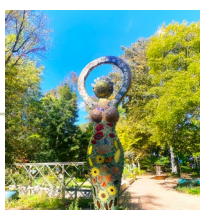
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When the Soul Lies Down sculpture by Theresa Arico exhibited at Sculpture in the Garden in the North Carolina Botanical Gardens.

COVER PHOTO BY DEBRA EDWARDS



PHOTO BY LONGISLANDNATIVES.COM

Editor's Words



PHOTO BY LAURA BILLINGHAM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Linda
Brown-
Kuhn**

Walking into a large, crowded room at the conference in Raleigh, hearing the buzz of conversation sprinkled with laughter's song, I felt my heart warm. People were getting the chance to meet, greet, reconnect with old friends, make new friends, share ideas, find inspiration, learn new things, and hatch fresh plans. They were getting fired up about horticultural therapy—person to person.

It is so nice to be with your people. You speak the same language so can dive into the leafy waters together without preamble. For instance, on the tour bus, several different people noticed a flowering bush growing prolifically along the road. What was it we wondered? Well, we figured it out. It is the native Groundseltree or Sea Myrtle (*Baccharis halimifolia*) and it is a fragrant, pollinator magnet (see photo above). That small collaboration was satisfying and fun. Imagine the results that larger, more serious horticultural therapy and therapeutic horticulture (HT/TH) collaborations could produce.

I also witnessed in conversations that we come to HT/TH from so many different directions and backgrounds. All the diverse

knowledge we bring can only serve to strengthen and propel this field forward in my opinion. I think we should embrace our differences and learn from them. And let's keep the collective effervescence momentum fizzing for those who attended the conference and for those who could not come.

To that end, read the feature article about collaboration on page 4 by accomplished horticultural therapist, Pam Caitlin, who started working in the field in 1976. She shares her wisdom in the "what", "why," and "who" of collaboration.

Also, form connections by joining a regional group (see page 5). Or volunteer at the national level. You'll meet amazing people while making a positive impact on this profession that matters now more than ever.

Here's to keeping the flame of our enthusiasm burning bright,

Linda



Collaboration in the field of Horticultural Therapy



BY Pam Catlin, HTR



Many practitioners find themselves feeling a bit like they are alone on an island as they carry out horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture (HT/TH) work. Often, those providing such services are the only ones doing so in a town or even in a state! If this is the case, the answer is not to keep working alone. Collaboration can make for a stronger, more sustainable, more successful and recognized program. This holds even for those working in a city where other horticultural therapists are contracting or employed. In looking at this topic there are three words that come to the forefront. Very simply they are “What,” “Who,” and “Why.”

What is collaboration?

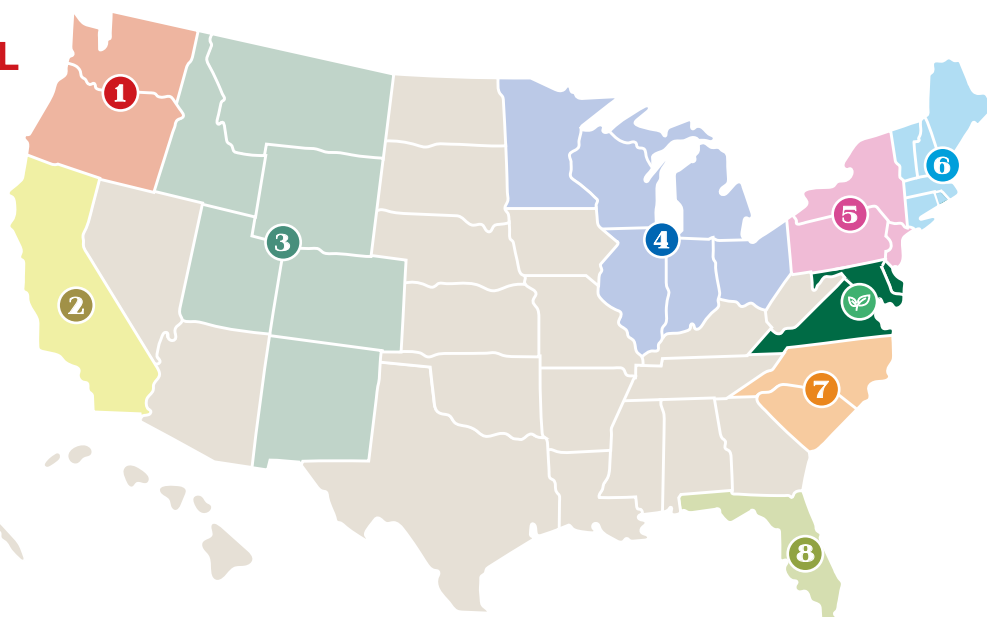
One definition from Merriam Webster.com is: “to work jointly with others or together, especially in an intellectual endeavor.” From Oxford Languages it is defined as “The action of working with someone to produce or create something.” In the world of

horticultural therapy, it is the coming together of two or more entities to build an HT/TH program that is greater than what one individual and site can do alone.

Why collaborate?

- As Aristotle wrote, "The whole is more than the sum of its parts."
- By collaborating, there is a greater opportunity for creativity and problem solving.
- Collaboration can help with program expansion through sharing financial resources, garden space, indoor space, volunteer base, donor base and more.
- Agencies will find an increased likelihood of obtaining grants. Funding sources respond positively when grant applications show collaborative action. Also, if contracting as an HT at a site, working together with the organization's development director is a way of applying for grants, something the individual contractor often is not able to do. Similarly, there might be compatible non-profit groups that would be eligible for grant funding incorporating horticultural therapy.
- There can be increased credibility for the HT/TH program when collaborating with established healthcare professions such as occupational therapy, music therapy and art therapy.
- Working collaboratively with other sites can result in an expansion of populations reached and benefits for all served.
- Combining efforts with well known agencies provides a public relations boost for the horticultural therapy program and its benefits.
- The more successful horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture programs become, the more recognized the field will become. The results of this will be more job opportunities, more people looking for training and more individuals and organizations becoming members of the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) and promoting the field.

HORTICULTURAL THERAPY REGIONAL GROUPS



 <p>1 Northwest Therapeutic Horticultural Network Group</p>	 <p>2 California Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>3 Rocky Mountain Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>4 Michigan Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>Budding Group! HT/TH practitioners in the District, Maryland and Virginia recognize the need to build our own local community and are now in the infant stages of creating a networking group. Come and grow with us!</p>
 <p>5 Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>6 Northeast Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>7 Carolinas Horticultural Therapy Network</p>	 <p>8 Florida Horticulture for Health Network</p>	

CHART BY APRIL ELLIS

Who can a horticultural therapist collaborate with?

- Other horticultural therapists in your area are a source for ideas, shared garden space, program materials and more.
- Horticultural therapists outside your locale can provide ideas and moral support.
- Staff and management at the work site can help with programming ideas. An example would be having the head chef at an assisted living site provide a cooking demonstration for residents using produce from the HT garden.
- Coordinating with adjunct therapies such as art therapy, music therapy, etc. and working with occupational therapists and physical therapists to maximize patient experiences in the gardens.
- If there is no room for a garden on site or an indoor plant room, collaborating with another agency or possibly a church might be the pathway to having indoor and outdoor space for a horticultural therapy program.
- Consider sites serving populations compatible with those currently receiving HT/TH at your location. Examples are having inter-generational programs or engaging people with developmental and/or cognitive disabilities in a community garden program.
- Local colleges can provide training opportunities as well as being a source for volunteers, in particular for special projects. Community colleges might be the conduit for providing those with special needs a level of education in various aspects of plant care.
- Many benefits can be derived from collaborating with nature related organizations such as nature centers, garden clubs, commercial nurseries and greenhouses, forest service, land grant universities' cooperative extension service, arboretums, botanic gardens, Audubon Society, and more.
- Collaborate with AHTA to serve as an internship supervisor. There is a great need for people willing to serve in this capacity. It is a rewarding experience and it can be a source of revenue.

The sky is the limit. The suggestions above are just the beginning. Think outside the box and make collaboration a part of your horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture future!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pam Catlin is a registered horticultural therapist and longtime member of the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA). She began working in the field in 1976. She served on the AHTA board and various committees, worked as a supervisor of horticultural therapy services for Chicago Botanic Garden, for many years was on the faculty for the Horticultural Therapy Institute, worked as a private HT contractor and for 12 years was the full-time director of HT with Adult Care Services in Prescott, AZ. In her retirement, Pam continues to serve as a distance supervisor for HT interns.

AHTA Members

UNITED STATES

State	Members	State	Members
Alabama	5	Montana	3
Alaska	2	Nebraska	2
Arizona	4	Nevada	-
Arkansas	1	New Hampshire	3
California	45	New Jersey	36
Colorado	21	New Mexico	4
Connecticut	4	New York	28
Delaware	1	North Carolina	33
D.C.	1	North Dakota	-
Florida	15	Ohio	9
Georgia	14	Oklahoma	1
Hawaii	2	Oregon	30
Idaho	4	Pennsylvania	32
Illinois	16	Rhode Island	2
Indiana	5	South Carolina	7
Iowa	3	South Dakota	-
Kansas	7	Tennessee	15
Kentucky	1	Texas	13
Louisiana	3	Utah	4
Maine	8	Vermont	2
Maryland	9	Virginia	15
Massachusetts	7	Washington	10
Michigan	5	West Virginia	1
Minnesota	12	Wisconsin	7
Mississippi	-	Wyoming	-
Missouri	10		

INTERNATIONAL

Country	Members
Australia	1
Austria	1
Canada	15
China	4
Germany	1
Hong Kong	3
Italy	4
Japan	6
Korea	2
Kuwait	1
Peru	1
Qatar	1
Russia	1
Singapore	3
Sweden	1
Taiwan	4
Ukraine	1
United Kingdom	1

DATA PROVIDED BY REVOLUTION AMC

HTR PROFILE

Sarah Tanke

HTR



PHOTO BY MATT HUGHES

INTERVIEWED BY
Linda Brown-Kuhn

Tell us about your background and education.

My journey into horticultural therapy (HT) has taken a winding path. I graduated from the University of Florida in 2017 with a degree in Psychology, and after graduating, I explored a variety of roles that ultimately helped shape my skills in working with people from all walks of life.

I spent several years working in outdoor education, teaching people of all ages and abilities about the natural world. I worked

in nonprofit development and fundraising, where I learned the importance of building strong relationships and supporting programs from behind the scenes. I also worked as an office associate in high-stress shelter environments, where I developed my skills in helping people feel seen and supported in difficult moments.

When I discovered horticultural therapy, I felt like I had found the perfect blend of my passions and skills. I earned my Certificate in Horticultural Therapy from the University of Florida in 2022 and have since stayed involved with their program as a teaching assistant and now as an instructor for the Introduction to Horticultural Therapy course.

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

My interests in topics like environmental

justice, food sovereignty, and community building have deeply influenced how I approach my work in horticultural therapy. At the Farm at Penny Lane, a farm dedicated to providing support and community for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, I've been able to weave my interests and values into my programming. I feel they complement the farm's mission of destigmatizing mental health care as well, which is also a personal passion of mine.

I believe strongly in creating environments where no one is defined by their diagnosis, and participants and facilitators are seen as equals—an approach that aligns with my belief in a more community-driven model of care. We focus on building supportive, inclusive communities rather than reinforcing traditional hierarchies. In the future, I hope to further integrate my interests into therapeutic horticulture by creating programming that not only promotes well-being but also supports broader movements for justice and equity.

What has been your experience in developing a career in HT?

Developing a career in HT, particularly as a young professional, has been incredibly challenging. Without a real financial safety net or decades of experience to pull from other fields, I've had to rely heavily on my love for the work and the support of the people around me. During my internship to become registered through the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), I worked three part-time jobs in addition to my internship due to its limited hours, all without health insurance, paid time off, or any real job security. This experience illuminated the significant barriers to entry



Weeding and bed preparation at the Farm at Penny Lane.
PHOTO BY SARAH TANKE

in this field, especially the lack of full-time positions and the need for paid mentorships and internships.

I was fortunate to find a (time limited) full-time position at the North Carolina Botanical Garden (NCBG), where I have the necessary support to sustain my career for the next couple of years. However, full-time opportunities in HT remain scarce. Looking ahead, I hope we can expand the availability of positions like mine and break down some of the barriers that prevent talented individuals from entering this field.



Sarah Tanke

PHOTO BY MATT HUGHES

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

The Therapeutic Horticulture program at NCBG began as part of a broader initiative to integrate the healing power of plants into community well-being. Over time, it has grown to serve a wide range of populations and has expanded into providing accessible educational opportunities in the field as well.

A big part of the program's growth has been thanks to our current Program Manager, Emilee Weaver. Working with Emilee has been truly inspiring —she's led a variety of incredibly impactful projects, including bringing therapeutic horticulture to Ukraine. Her work is really making a difference, not just locally, but globally.

In my role as the Therapeutic Horticulture Community Engagement Specialist, I have the pleasure of facilitating a variety of hands-on programs, like our therapeutic horticulture and vocational training groups at the Farm at Penny Lane. I also work with several assisted living facilities to offer therapeutic horticulture activities that help residents improve their quality of life through connection with nature.

Do you have personal perspectives to share with present or future

horticultural therapists?

As horticultural therapists, we have the privilege of working in a field deeply connected to nature and the healing process, but it's essential to recognize that the concept of nature as a healing force is not something we created. Indigenous communities and many marginalized groups have been using nature for healing long before the formalized field of horticultural therapy began. These communities have long understood the restorative power of the land, integrating it into their cultures, health practices, and ways of life for generations. We are building on a foundation that they laid, and it's crucial to honor and learn from that legacy.

For current and future horticultural therapists, I encourage you to seek out and listen (truly listen) to voices and perspectives that differ from your own. Every person brings a unique relationship with nature shaped by their culture, background, and experiences. These insights can enrich your practice, making it more accessible and effective for the wide range of individuals we aim to support. This might mean designing programs that honor cultural traditions, rethinking garden spaces to accommodate those with physical disabilities, or creating trauma-informed approaches that consider the mental health experiences of marginalized communities.

Accessibility also means expanding

the pathways through which people can become involved in and work within this field. It's important that we create opportunities for individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to explore careers in horticultural therapy, offering mentorship, flexible learning options, and financial support where needed. By breaking down the barriers to entry—whether they be educational, financial, or logistical, we open doors for more people to contribute to the field and bring their invaluable perspectives.

It's also critical to meet people where they are. We can't assume that everyone has an innate connection to nature. For some,

particularly those from marginalized or historically oppressed groups, nature and land may be associated with trauma—whether due to forced displacement, slavery, or environmental degradation in their communities. As practitioners, we must approach our work with cultural humility, understanding that the outdoors may hold a complex or even painful meaning for some individuals.

I strongly believe that inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) must be foundational principles in our work. Without them, we risk perpetuating the same systemic barriers and inequalities that have existed in this field and many other fields throughout history. We have a responsibility to create healing spaces that are truly for everyone—not just in theory, but in practice. That means continually evaluating our programs, learning from underrepresented voices, and ensuring our gardens and programs are accessible to all.

By fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and equity in therapeutic horticulture, we not only elevate the quality of care we provide, but we also enrich our profession by welcoming a broader spectrum of ideas, experiences, and possibilities. It's through this diversity that we can continue to grow and thrive as a field.



2024 AHTA Annual Conference Review



BY **Sara Rodriguez, LMFT**
& Laura Rumpf, HTR
AHTA Conference Work Team Co-Leads

The 2024 AHTA Annual Conference, *Collective Effervescence: Honoring Collaboration in Times of Change*, took place in Raleigh/Durham North Carolina, October 18th and 19th. The conference opened with a land acknowledgement and condolences to those affected by the recent storm that devastated much of Western North Carolina.

In addition to the traditional Keynote Speaker sessions, 60-minute presentations, 90-minute workshops, pre-conference tours, and poster presentations, the Conference Work Team strived to meet requests of previous conference attendees by adding networking opportunities through the Roundtable Discussions and a Regional Group Networking session, a dedicated New Members table, and a Talking Circle where attendees could ask questions of the Board of Directors face to face. Like mycorrhizae in the soil, these connections flourish and are mutually beneficial, leading to robust practices and vigorous green spaces.



With the conference's theme of Collective Effervescence, the conference work team sought to feature speakers who could spark a collaborative energy that would be lasting, poignant, and make room for continued conversations. Keynote Speaker, Jazmin Albarran, MBA, Executive Director of Seed Your Future, spoke to attendees about the value of youth pursuing careers with plants, the lack of public knowledge regarding how fulfilling and lucrative these careers can be, and encouraged practitioners of therapeutic horticulture and horticultural therapy to continue



bringing awareness to their field. Jazmin energized the audience with her timely call to action.

On Saturday the 19th we learned about foodscaping, innovative gardening, and more from bestselling author and horticulturist, Brie Arthur. Brie encouraged attendees to work with the land, not against it, and cease the use of herbicides to slow the negative domino effect that can occur when applied. She reminded attendees that it is not a requirement to sow our seeds in straight

BY **Matt Janson, CTRS, HTR**
President of AHTA

PROMOTING HT

The American Horticultural Therapy Association's (AHTA) 2024 Annual Awards were revealed at the recent in-person AHTA conference, *Collective Effervescence, Honoring Collaboration in Times of Change*. I was honored to oversee the review and selection of these outstanding recipients, who represent the best in horticultural therapy, and felt privileged to present them their awards. I invite you to nominate new candidates for the 2025 AHTA Annual Awards when nominations open in February. I encourage you to be a part of this process in naming more professionals in our field who deserve recognition!

RHEA McCLANDLISS PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AWARD

Awarded to a registered member of AHTA in recognition of significant contribution to the field of horticultural therapy characterized by distinctive service in the promotion, organization, and development of horticultural therapy programs or for an original or unusual contribution affecting the philosophy or practice of horticultural therapy.

THIS YEAR'S WINNER

Kirk W. Hines

Kirk W. Hines is the Director of Horticultural Therapy at A.G. Rhodes, a nonprofit providing therapy and rehabilitation services in Metro Atlanta. He founded the horticultural therapy program there in 2013, after serving 21 years at Wesley Woods Hospital, where he also established a similar program. A member of AHTA since 1993, Kirk holds a BS in Ornamental Horticulture with a concentration in horticultural therapy from Berry College. He has lectured widely and has been actively involved in various leadership roles within the AHTA. His work has been featured in numerous journals and media outlets, highlighting the impact of horticultural therapy in healthcare settings.



PHOTO BY JEAN D'AMORE

RHEA McCLANDLISS PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AWARD

Awarded to an organization or individual who has given freely of their time, talent, and energy with special significance for horticultural therapy on a local, state or national level. This award is presented to someone who has made outstanding voluntary contributions to an organization or program.



PHOTO BY JEAN D'AMORE

THIS YEAR'S WINNER

MaryAnne McMillian

Maryanne McMillian is, and for many years has been, an active member of AHTA. She serves on numerous work teams, presided as a past president of AHTA, and ran the yearly conferences for over a decade. Since 2008, Maryanne has worked with Allies, a non-profit serving populations with special needs in New Jersey. She was also employed at Rutgers from 1994-2020 and Midland School from 2001-2005. Maryanne completed her studies between Rutgers and New York Botanical Garden's Horticultural Therapy program and became an HTR in 2008. The populations she has worked with include veterans at the Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home; exceptional youth at Midland School; at-risk youth at the New Jersey State School for Boys (now known as the New Jersey Training School); elders at skilled nursing facilities; volunteers of all ages at Rutgers Gardens, where she served as Volunteer Coordinator for 27 years; and currently, individuals with special needs at Allies, Inc.



PHOTO BY JEAN D'AMORE

AHTA THERAPEUTIC GARDEN DESIGN AWARD

Awarded for the purpose of identifying and publicizing excellence in therapeutic design and programming to existing gardens and landscapes designed and maintained for therapeutic purposes.



Water features at Lerner Garden.

PHOTO BY COASTAL MAINE BOTANICAL GARDENS

THIS YEAR'S WINNER

Lerner Garden

Accepted by Garron Dorr

Opened in 2009, the Lerner Garden is a sensory-rich, less-than-an-acre space designed to engage visitors through five themed regions. It features adaptive tools like grabbers and wheelchair-accessible raised beds, alongside textured and scented plants. The signage includes braille, and the paths are raised for visually impaired visitors. This is complemented by an auditory waterfall to help with navigation through the space. The garden promotes social interaction and safety with benches, gathering spaces, and interactive features like a reflexology labyrinth. Its universal design principles ensure accessibility for all, with varied paving textures and gentle slopes for mobility aids. Each sensory node along the path offers unique experiences, fostering comfort and independence. [Click to see a video about the garden.](#)

HONORARY MEMBERSHIP AWARD

Honorary AHTA membership in recognition of long service and/or distinctive contribution to the field.

THIS YEAR'S WINNER

Derrick Stowell

Derrick Stowell has been the Education and Horticultural Therapy Program Administrator at the University of Tennessee (UT) Gardens since 2012. He holds a bachelor's degree from Maryville College and a master's degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of Tennessee. After serving as an AmeriCorps volunteer, he directed the national camp program for the Amputee Coalition of America before earning his Ph.D. in Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences. A Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist and Registered Horticultural Therapist, Derrick has developed numerous programs at the UT Gardens, served on the board of AHTA, including a year as President. He has received multiple awards for his contributions to horticultural therapy and is sought internationally for consulting on program development.



PHOTO BY MATT TURNER



National Horticultural Therapy Week 2025

MARCH 16-22

What are your plans for celebrating HT Week and spreading the word about all the healing mind and body benefits of this practice?

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS THAT ARE ALWAYS WINNERS:

- ✿ Contact your state and local officials to request a proclamation for National Horticultural Therapy Week (NHTW). Find resources and a sample proclamation [here](#).
- ✿ Get involved with your regional networking group.
- ✿ Host a garden party (or flower or houseplant party) to celebrate what we do and recognize local affiliated HT programs.

lines, nor to place our gardens in "plant coffins," jokingly referring to the rectangular and symmetrical standard that exists. Her inclusion of children in all aspects of gardening provided inspiration for those attendees who work with this population.

Attendees of the pre-conference tours, held on Oct. 17, had the option of selecting from two tours: one centering around the Durham area (Hawk's Nest Healing Garden, Hub Farm and Duke Gardens) and another in the Chapel Hill area (Transplanting Traditions, North Carolina Botanical Gardens, and The Farm at Penny Lane). It goes without saying that all five senses were activated throughout the tours. Green spaces, gardens, and farms greeted the groups with technique, history, and knowledge. While photos will be cherished and provide a fabulous visual cue to remember our times together in the green spaces, there is no comparison to experiencing these places firsthand alongside new and old friends.

While the social connectedness of an in-person experience remains valid and valuable, we at AHTA also strive to be inclusive and available. As such, we look forward to the next conference which will take place virtually in 2025. Likewise, the virtual option, which breaks down financial and geographic barriers, will be followed by another in-person conference, so we can once again experience collective effervescence!



PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. Keynote speaker, Jazmin Albarran, from Seed Your Future.
2. Bestselling author and keynote speaker, Brie Arthur.
3. Transplanting Traditions Community Farm.
4. Fun at the North Carolina Botanical Garden
5. Hawk's Nest Healing Garden.
6. Hub Farm.

PHOTOS 1-4 BY LAURA RUMPF
PHOTOS 5-6 BY APRIL ELLIS

Keep your eyes on AHTA's social media for a special announcement about plans for National Horticultural Therapy Week 2025!



American Horticultural Therapy Association
ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF HORTICULTURE AS THERAPY



AHTA Moving Forward

As we approach the end of 2024, the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) is celebrating our accomplishments. Thank you to the AHTA Board of Directors, members of work teams and review boards, and members at large who helped achieve these accomplishments!

HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE YEAR 2024:

- ✿ Social media platforms have increased postings and responses.
- ✿ Preapproval of coursework has launched preapproving human and plant science coursework for the HTR applicant.
- ✿ 2024 Partnership Guide with A La Carte items and specific campaigns was created, and a youth campaign is developing now.
- ✿ Implicit bias training for board members to happen in 2025 thanks to the previous DEI task force and membership work team.
- ✿ The THP, Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner was launched in June!
- ✿ AHTA's management was moved to Revolution AMC for office management and exam credentialing. AHTA's executive director is Matt Turner, Ph.D. ICE-CCP.
- ✿ Chip Carter was hired for marketing and strategic planning which began October 16, 2024.
- ✿ The Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture has moved to the open access model to gain greater exposure and access. The Article Processing Fee will be free to members and \$300.00 for non-members.
- ✿ The AHTA 2024 conference "Collective Effervescence – Honoring Collaboration in Times of Change" was planned and created, and what a success it was!
- ✿ The Credentialing work team continues to work towards exam credentialing along with the guidance of Matt Turner, Ph. D ICE-CCP.
- ✿ The Professional Registration Review Board has approved 22 HTR applicants and 6 THP applicants with more pending.
- ✿ Webinars are now free for members and \$35 for non-members.
- ✿ The AHTA Magazine work team published excellent magazine issues for members.
- ✿ HT Certificate Accreditation Review Board approved HT certificate program at UCLA, and HT course at College of DuPage. University of Tennessee approved for graduate level HT coursework to begin in Fall 2025.
- ✿ On 10/16/24 the board of directors met in person for strategic marketing planning 2025-2027.



Congratulations to the Newly Credentialed HTRs and to AHTA's First THPs!

We would like to recognize and celebrate the 22 members who were recently awarded professional registration as Horticultural Therapist-Registered (HTRs) with AHTA between 11/1/23 and 10/30/24. We are also pleased to present the first group of six Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioners (THPs) since this new credential began on 6/1/24. Your impressive achievements advance our mission to inform others about the field while gaining greater public awareness of, and access to, horticultural therapy.

HTRs:

Carolyn Brown	Gayle J. Gratop
Katie Davis	Emily McDaniel
Andrea Dean	Kelly Warnick
Cory Carmichael	Netanya Thompson
Peg Falconer	Tae-eun Kim
Jeanne M. Schultz	Marisol Clark
Rohini Yeshwant	Mandi Atkinson
Deshpande	Greg Stivland
Virginia Castagna	Sarah A.
Amy Bruzzichesi	Himmelheber
Anna Peterson	Francine B. Colon
Christina Lui	Erika W. Heilmann

THPs:

(Since 6/1/24)

Deborah Wolf	Kevin Harvey
Ife Lloyd	Suzanne Turner
Stephanie Scriven	Megan Goulden
Ramirez	
Abigail Lynn	
Perret-Gentil	



In the last years, there has been a change in the culture of AHTA, more collaboration, more inclusion, and acceptance of those with differing views.

The [AHTA Annual Membership Meeting](#) was held on October 18, 2024, at the 2024 AHTA Annual Conference "Collective Effervescence- Honoring Collaboration in Times of Change". At the conference, we also had an AHTA Board of Directors Talking Circle to allow for listening to our AHTA members.

These changes serve members of AHTA. I trust AHTA will continue to move forward. There is still more work to do and AHTA has a strong board of directors along with a strong management company- Revolution AMC- to keep the momentum going. As now past president, my goals during the last years included making AHTA robust and to change the culture of AHTA. I believe this was accomplished. With the marketing plans and exam credentialing, membership will increase and the AHTA will reach its full potential in the next coming years!

I want to give a shout out to all the AHTA Board of Directors who ended their term with the board — R. Nicole Magor, Sara Rodriguez LMFT, Laura Rumpf HTR, Charles Jordan CW4®, MAS. Thank you for your excellent service to AHTA!

As well as welcoming the new board members – Holly Harrison, Katie Ryzhikov HTR, Christina Kocol LPC, NCC, CGP, and Kamyshia Thompson, I would also like to express appreciation to returning board members, Rebecca Francis EdD, HTM and Binxia Xue, PhD HTR. Welcome aboard!

In closing, I want to thank everyone for the opportunity to serve as the President of AHTA. It has been my honor, my passion for, and my vision of AHTA to grow, have more inclusion and diversity, and to be the example of upholding professional standards in the profession of horticultural therapy. As Anais Nin once said, "And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom". AHTA took risks in the past years and now AHTA is blossoming into the future!

Gratefully,

Lana Dreyfuss
LPCC, LCADC, SEP, HTR
Past President of AHTA



Horticultural Therapy and the 1915 Waiver Program

A Growing Opportunity for Reimbursement

BY **Katie Ryzhikov**
M.S., OTR/L, HTR

While the benefits of horticultural therapy are clear to us as practitioners, its inclusion in healthcare reimbursement programs is still an emerging frontier. The federally funded 1915 Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program offers a potential pathway for states to provide horticultural therapy services funded by Medicaid, making it accessible to a wider range of individuals who can benefit from this unique form of therapy.

Maryland: A Pioneer in Horticultural Therapy Reimbursement

Maryland is at the forefront of integrating horticultural therapy into Medicaid-reimbursed services. Under the state's 1915(i) waiver program, horticultural therapy is recognized as a reimbursable service, allowing eligible individuals to receive this innovative therapy through Medicaid funding. This inclusion highlights Maryland's progressive approach to incorporating non-traditional therapies into its Intensive Behavioral Health program, aiming to enhance the quality of life for youth with serious mental health conditions.

Maryland's move to include horticultural therapy as a reimbursable service sets a precedent for other states, showcasing the potential for broader acceptance and integration of this therapeutic modality. By recognizing the profound impact of horticultural therapy on well-being, Maryland sets a powerful example for other states to explore similar opportunities within their waiver programs.

It should be noted that any horticultural therapist wishing to take advantage of the 1915(i) program in Maryland must have their

HTR designation and have an NPI number from a different healthcare discipline. This number is used while registering with Medicaid and in all reimbursement documentation.

Illinois: A Missed Opportunity for Horticultural Therapy Inclusion

In contrast, Illinois provides a cautionary tale of missed opportunity. In their 2020 draft plan for their 1915(i) waiver program, Illinois initially proposed the inclusion of horticultural therapy as a Therapeutic Support Service. This proposal reflected a growing recognition of the potential benefits of horticultural therapy and aligned with a broader movement to include diverse, holistic therapies in Medicaid-funded services.

However, when the plan was ratified in 2023, horticultural therapy was notably excluded. This exclusion underscores the challenges of advocating for non-traditional therapies within established reimbursement frameworks. Illinoisan HT's shouldn't feel too bad as Illinois also chose not to fund art, dance, equine, music or drama therapy which were also in the initial draft proposal.

The exclusion of horticultural therapy from Illinois' final 1915(i) waiver plan likely resulted from a combination of factors common in the decision-making process for Medicaid and other public health services. While specific reasons for Illinois' decision were not explicitly stated in public documents, we can make educated guesses about what these may have been.

Lack of sufficient evidence. One major barrier to the inclusion of horticultural therapy could be the perceived lack of robust evidence demonstrating its effectiveness compared to more established therapies. Decision-makers may have prioritized therapies with a larger body of clinical

research or those already widely recognized in the medical community. Despite the growing body of evidence supporting horticultural therapy, it may still be seen as less conventional compared to other therapies.

Budget constraints. Medicaid programs are often limited by tight budgets and must prioritize services that are deemed essential or have the most significant impact on the population they serve. This highlights the need to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of HT as a therapeutic modality.

Lack of Advocacy or Awareness Among Decision Makers. Horticultural therapy may not have had strong advocacy or representation during the planning and ratification process of Illinois' 1915(i) waiver. Decision-makers may not have been fully aware of the benefits or the existing evidence supporting horticultural therapy, leading to its exclusion. Advocacy plays a critical role in influencing policy decisions, and without strong advocacy, HT could have been overlooked.

Concerns About Implementation Feasibility: The practical aspects of implementing horticultural therapy, such as the availability of trained horticultural therapists, appropriate facilities, and integration into existing service models, could have posed challenges. States often consider the feasibility of scaling up services across various settings, and if horticultural therapy was seen as too difficult to implement uniformly, it may have been excluded.

Administrative Challenges: There may also be several key barriers to the professional recognition of horticultural therapists. Unlike other healthcare professions, HT lacks licensure across states or countries. This creates variability in the training

of horticultural therapists and makes it difficult for employers and clients to assess qualifications. This creates challenges in defining the profession's legitimacy within medical or therapeutic circles and limits reimbursement opportunities from insurance companies or government programs.

Horticultural therapists are also not currently eligible to receive a National Provider Identifier (NPI). This NPI number is a unique 10-digit identification number assigned to healthcare providers in the United States to streamline their identification across different healthcare entities, insurers, and government programs. Each healthcare discipline receives a taxonomy code. At this time horticultural therapy does not have its own designated code making it difficult to bill for services rendered. As a point of reference, art, dance, music and drama therapy each have their own taxonomy code.

Understanding these factors highlights the importance of targeted advocacy, continued research, and efforts to increase awareness of horticultural therapy's benefits among policymakers.

Exploring Opportunities

I believe that a promising avenue for advocacy and a strategic entry point lies in

EXPRESSIVE & EXPERIENTIAL THERAPIES COVERED BY HCBS 1915 WAIVER PROGRAMS*

STATE	THERAPIES COVERED
CO	Art, Music, Play
DC	Art, Dance, Drama, Music
FL	Art, Music, Play
IN	Music
LA	Art, Music, Equine
MD	Art, Dance/Movement, Equine-Assisted, Music, Drama, Horticulture
ND	Expressive therapy
NY	Art, Music, Play
PA	Art, Music, Equine
TX	Music, Equine
WA	Music
WI	Art, Music, Equine

* Information subject to change. Please contact your local health department for further information.

drawing direct comparisons with expressive or experiential therapies such as art, music, dance, equine, drama or play therapy that are already covered under Medicaid HCBS 1915(c) and (i) Waiver Programs— Like these expressive therapies above), horticultural therapy meets similar therapeutic goals, ultimately aiming to improve individuals' well-being, and enhance daily functioning through

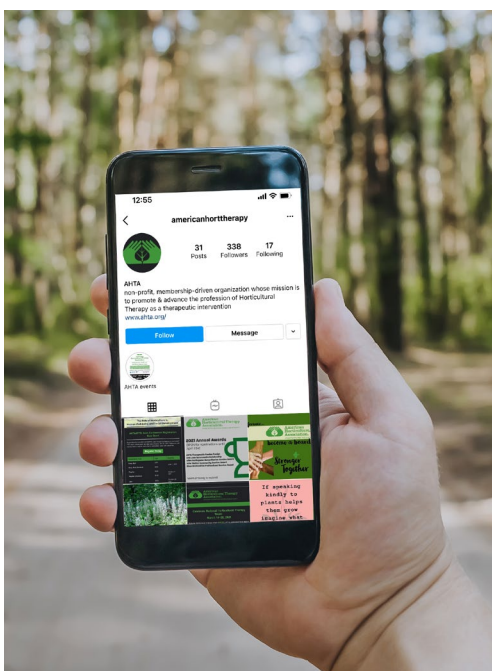
meaningful and therapeutic activities. Given that several states already recognize and utilize these expressive and experiential therapies, they may be particularly open to expanding their service lines to include horticultural therapy as a valuable addition.

Horticultural therapy holds significant potential as a reimbursable service under Medicaid waiver programs like the 1915(i). Maryland's success in including horticultural therapy offers a model for other states, while Illinois' exclusion highlights the ongoing challenges in gaining acceptance for non-traditional therapies. With continued effort, horticultural therapy can become a recognized and accessible therapy for individuals across the country, promoting health and well-being through the power of plants and nature. In tandem, horticultural therapists will gain access to steady income streams through insurance reimbursements, thus increasing the financial viability of their profession.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katie Ryzhikov is the owner of Blossom Therapeutic Services. She provides horticultural and occupational therapy services to adults and children in Davidsonville, Maryland.



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American Horticultural Therapy Association.
ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF HORTICULTURE AS THERAPY

Trees Can Help Ground in Uncertain Times

PHOTO BY ROB MULALLY
VIA [UNSPLASH.COM](https://unsplash.com)

BY **Brendan Yukins, LSW**

We are now facing an era of uncertain conditions both in our ecosystem and in our system of government. Regardless of your political party or belief system, now is a time of unmatched environmental devastation (Ebi et al, 2021). What should our response be within the field of horticultural therapy? What can nature offer us during times of political and ecological crisis?

One of the ways that nature can help is to reframe our sense of time (Francis & Hester, 1990; Yukins, 2024). Trees, in particular, can help us mark time's passage outside of a calendar. Recently, I conducted an analysis of themes found on social media (Yukins, 2024). People who had transcendent, spiritual experiences with trees reported a trend in their emotional reaction: respect for the wisdom that trees collect with age (Yukins, 2024). We almost never look at trees and wish they

were younger. Instead, we appreciate the markings of history they have grown with and around.

So, if the world is in chaos, and you are unsure of what you can do, go outside and lay both hands on a tree. Imagine when that tree first sprouted. What was happening then? Look for markings on the tree. Did the tree lose branches? Are there cuts or scarring on the trunk? Imagine the tree through time, growing around these challenges. What can we learn from this tree's tenacity? Finally, thank the tree for its continued survival. Maybe, with your

eyes closed, you will feel them thanking you back.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan Yukins is a social worker in Chicago, Illinois. He serves as a Board Member for the American Horticultural Therapy Association and is the former president of Chase Park Community Garden. Brendan is currently pursuing his PhD in Couple and Family Therapy at Adler University and presents at conferences regularly on Climate Change Anxiety and Family Therapy After Natural Disaster.

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Enriching Coursework Through Real-World Research and Programming Application

The University of Florida Certificate in Horticultural Therapy

BY **Elizabeth (Leah) Diehl**
RLA, HTM

The University of Florida Certificate in Horticultural Therapy (CHT) is dedicated to providing a comprehensive and interactive educational experience that prepares students for effective practice in diverse therapeutic settings. As the first fully online HT education option, the CHT uses a variety of tools to produce an educational platform where students

from across the globe come together to learn from both the coursework and each other. Because courses are asynchronous, students can access the course at the time that works best for them with assignments due at the end of the week.

Coursework

The CHT consists of four courses that fulfill the American Horticultural Therapy Association requirement for HT coursework. In our third course, Program Management in HT, students create an HT/TH program from the ground up using

a series of charrettes that guide them through the program planning process. The result is a working plan for an HT/TH program designed for a specific client group. The fourth course in the CHT is either an internship or an independent study project, both of which require hands-on work. The internship can be done at UF or in any other location that can support the in-person learning experience, and our team can help students find an opportunity that is right for them.



The greenhouse at Wilmot Botanical Gardens on the UF campus.
ALL PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH DIEHL

Research & Programming

Ongoing programming and research at UF's Therapeutic Horticulture Program serves as the foundation of the CHT, informing the curriculum with best practices gleaned from the sixteen distinct client groups served to date and the twelve research studies completed, with more of both on the horizon. The quality of the program and its positive research findings was recently acknowledged with \$500,000 from the UF president's office to support the expansion of therapeutic horticulture programming for students with mental health struggles.

Partnerships

Because the TH program is situated at the nexus of UF and UF Health, we have the pleasure of working with many of the medical clinics and departments. We recently published a paper on the effects of TH on low back pain in partnership with UF's Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Department. We are currently wrapping up a project on the effects of TH on care partner burden in Parkinson's Disease, continuing our work with young adults with developmental disabilities, increasing TH programming in addiction recovery with the Florida Recovery Center, and launching a program with UF's Psychiatric Hospital.

Through partnerships with UF Health and a commitment to addressing various client needs, the CHT not only equips graduates for successful careers but also contributes to the advancement of horticultural therapy as a vital therapeutic practice. The University of Florida strives to create accessible and implementable programming for potential horticultural therapists across the globe!



For more information scan the QR code or email us at CHTinfo@ifas.ufl.edu



A group of students discuss a wellness strategy as part of a TH session.



Participant in a TH session for UF students.



Women veteran's TH session in the UF greenhouse.

Eat Your Yard Jax

Using Plants to Build Relationships



This group enjoys a guided tour of the property. Check the website for more tour information and educational activities.

ALL PHOTOS BY COURTNEY LEDWICK

BY Courtney Ledwick

Although Jacksonville is a sprawling city that proudly holds the title of the largest city by land area in the contiguous United States, Eat Your Yard Jax has remarkably created a close-knit community of plant lovers that spans the entire city. Eat Your Yard Jax is a nonprofit nursery on the west side of Jacksonville dedicated to empowering “locals to eat local, one yard at a time.” Through partnerships with local organizations and businesses, enthusiastic staff and volunteers, and a variety of engaging events, Eat Your Yard Jax provides a warm and supportive environment that fosters not only lasting relationships with plants but with fellow plant lovers as well.

Community Partnerships

The strength of its community partnerships is a key factor in what makes this organization so special. From small local businesses to larger statewide organizations, Eat Your Yard Jax utilizes a variety of partnerships to spread its mission throughout the city. A particularly meaningful relationship is with local public schools and homeschool groups. Many of these relationships span several years and provide an invaluable opportunity for school-age children to begin their journey with sustainability early in life. Eat Your Yard Jax has had the privilege of hosting over 150 school groups over the past four years! These trips to the nursery create lasting memories and inspire a sense of awe and responsibility toward nature that is sure to shape the next generation.

Horticultural Therapy and Inclusivity

One of the most powerful aspects of Eat Your Yard Jax's work is the way it promotes inclusivity and wellness through plants. The nursery integrates horticultural therapy, which is the use of gardening and plant-based activities to improve physical and mental well-being. This form of therapy has been shown to reduce stress, improve mood, enhance cognitive function, and promote social interaction, making it a valuable tool for individuals with special needs and those experiencing emotional challenges.

Through its partnership with the North Florida School of Special Education, Eat Your Yard Jax provides employment opportunities for individuals with special needs, recognizing their value and importance in the community. These individuals benefit from meaningful work in a nurturing environment, while the nursery exemplifies how plants can foster personal growth and community connection. The therapeutic benefits of working with plants extend beyond physical tasks, allowing employees and participants to experience a deep sense of accomplishment, belonging, and purpose.

Staff and Volunteers

The vision of Eat Your Yard Jax's founder, Tim Armstrong, has inspired many to experience the unique way that plants and nature can bring people together. Armstrong believes that “a yard should be more than a postage-stamp sterile environment. It should be a place that feeds mind, body, and spirit, a place to share nature with children, family, and neighbors.” His enthusiasm is contagious, and this energy is reflected in the dedication of the volunteers. Eat Your



Every day is an adventure.



Come grow with us!



A young girl enjoys life on the farm.

Yard Jax hosts a weekly volunteer day, where individuals come to help with tasks like re-potting, plant maintenance, and other nursery upkeep. The welcoming atmosphere keeps volunteers returning, furthering the mission and contributing to a sense of community.

Events

Finally, Eat Your Yard Jax fosters relationships and community through its engaging classes, workshops, and special events. The nursery can often be found participating in farmers' markets and speaking engagements across Jacksonville. In addition, they host classes on a range of topics including medicinal plants, soil health, and herbal tea-making. These events provide opportunities for community members to learn, connect,

and deepen their relationship with nature.

Incorporating horticultural therapy into its offerings, Eat Your Yard Jax has begun to work with local therapists to provide more therapeutic horticulture classes. An upcoming class titled "Healing with Plants: A Class on Grief" will be held this winter, which reflects the nursery's commitment to holistic well-being. This class recognizes the profound connections between nature and emotional health, offering participants a safe and healing space to work through their grief using plants as a medium for reflection and recovery.

Additionally, Eat Your Yard Jax hosts annual events that the community looks forward to every year, such as the upcoming 4th Annual Persimmon Festival. This festival celebrates the often-

overlooked persimmon fruit and provides a beautiful occasion for the community to visit the nursery, immerse themselves in all it has to offer, and connect with others in a joyful, welcoming environment.

Conclusion

Through meaningful partnerships, dedicated volunteers and staff, and engaging events, Eat Your Yard Jax stands as a shining example of how a local initiative can bridge gaps in a large city, fostering connections that celebrate both nature and community spirit. The integration of horticultural therapy only deepens the impact of their work, offering tangible benefits for mental, physical, and emotional health, while cultivating a space where everyone is welcome and valued.



ACTIVITY



Flower Punk

Flower Punk creation of dried materials including seaweed and cotton.

BY Laura Rumpf, HTR

Autumn is an opportunity to pay homage to summer's bounty by observing and using its remains. We can appreciate beauty at all stages of the life cycle to which humans belong. This session connects us to nature's flow and to our fellow humans, using inspiration by the artistry of [Azuma Makoto](#). This activity was successfully conducted with students at Southern Maine Community College experiencing anxiety and depression.

Makoto is a Japanese botanical sculptor who was particularly moved by Japanese monks that blessed flowers with prayers and intentions, then distributed them to those affected by a disaster. He describes this act of entrusting prayers to the flowers, and "arranging them even in the face of disaster," as embodying a "punk spirit." Makoto draws vitality and beauty in something that is always moving towards death and decay. This process of decay



Students experimenting with shadows and angles at Flower Punk session.
PHOTOS BY LAURA RUMPF, HTR

is depicted in photographs and [videos](#), including arrangements that have been sent up into space, to the depths of the ocean floor, and encased in ice.



1. MATERIALS

- Variety of living and dried plant material, including unconventional materials such as seaweed, and altered items (e.g. spray-painted pine branches in silver)
- Discarded tin cans (any sharp edges should be smoothed). This material offers a unique and eco-friendly vibe to the design.
- Material for decorating container if desired (colored paper, newspaper, markers, scissors, tape, etc.).
- Holding material that will support flower stems, such as floral foam or stones.
- Two photography "stations": colored backgrounds (bed sheets, colored paper, etc.), stool or table, flashlight.
- Watering can, if using fresh material
- Electronic device(s) to display photographs of Azuma Makoto's work if desired, and to take photos of participants' creations.

2. SET-UP FOR MATERIALS

- Place any fresh material into buckets of water.
- Lay out other materials (dried flowers, spray-painted pinecones, etc.).
- Offer a variety of can sizes for participants to choose from.

3. PROCEDURE

Have participants select a container of their choice. The containers either can be prepared in advance by filling them with the holding material or, if suitable for the group, participants can fill their selected container themselves. Take precautions if clients are prone to putting materials in their mouths.

Select from the plant or natural material laid out. As participants begin placing material into their container and creating their "botanical sculptures," invite them to include intention.

After participants build their botanical sculptures, encourage them to photograph their designs against different backgrounds, observing how each background affects the appearance or mood of their piece. Suggest that they experiment with the flashlight or camera flash options on their phones to create shadow, contrast, vibrancy, tone, etc.

4. AT THE SESSION'S END

Point out to participants that their design is a living, evolving work of art. Material may be added at any time. Decayed pieces should be removed, and holding material should dry out or be rehydrated if adding fresh material. Encourage participants to notice and consider adding dried grasses or seed heads as fall and winter transforms plant material into dried "sculptures." One of the many benefits of having participants photograph their creations is that they can send their photos as gifts of intention, connecting to the world in true "punk spirit."

Soil: A Black Mother's Garden

By Camille T. Dungy

REVIEW BY
Karin A. Bailey

Author Camille T. Dungy has won several honors for her collections of essays and poetry, earning the title of University Distinguished Professor at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. In her recent book, *Soil: A Black Mother's Garden*, she delivers a thought-provoking, passionate, hard-hitting work that delves into nature, gardening, sustainability, social injustice, and racism. The book records the challenges that her family encounter after moving to Fort Collins and with their new home garden, referred to as the prairie project.

Over many years, Dungy and her family have strived to transform the once uninviting, depleted, and toxic garden into a diverse, colorful, safe ecosystem where its inhabitants can survive and flourish. The prairie project serves as a societal metaphor, often mentioned in her reflections. While Dungy presents information on sustainable horticulture, the dangers of biocides, and struggles associated with invasive bindweed, she also presents her readers with accounts of the fears, struggles, and violence experienced by those who are marginalized in this country.

Dungy describes her life's journey, which includes time spent in Virginia, California, and her Colorado home. She shares her poetry throughout the book, referring to several writers, activists, and historical figures who have influenced her life and

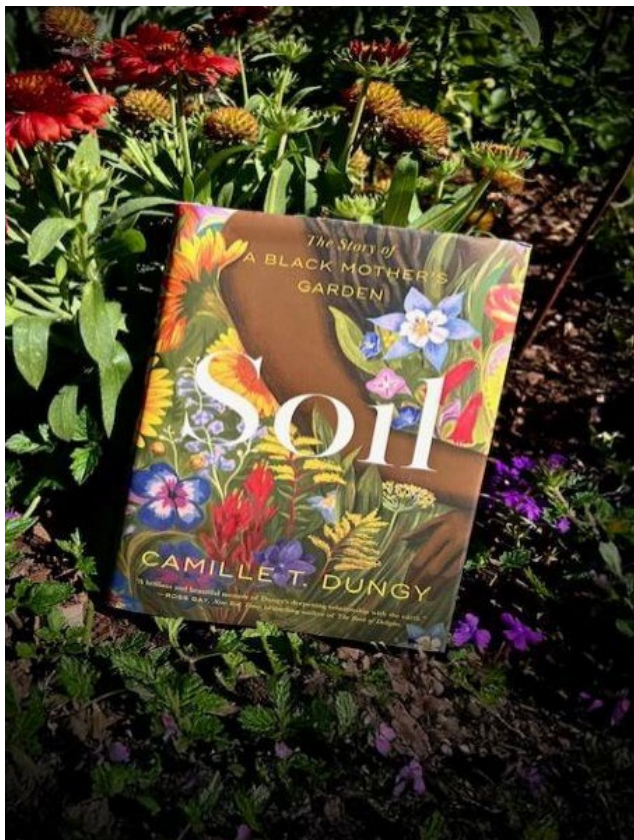


PHOTO BY KARIN A. BAILEY

writings. One such influence is Harlem Renaissance poet, activist, and gardener Anne Spencer, who cultivated a sanctuary garden amidst racial segregation in Lynchburg, VA. Dungy offers this poignant reflection after she writes about Spencer's life and contributions: "Gardens, history, and hope are the same. Though once dearly beloved, if left unattended, without anyone's dedication and care, much will be totally lost" (p. 114).

The book's cover features stunning artwork of a mother's arm comforting and supporting the diverse, colorful garden. Hope and transformation can be seen through the before and after landscape drawings of the prairie project, located within the front and back

book cover. Black and white photos introduce each section of the book, highlighting native plants and inhabitants in the prairie project, some of which capture the hands of Dungy's daughter Callie lovingly caring for those specimens. At the conclusion of the book, Dungy thoughtfully includes a section of questions designed for a lively book club discussion.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karin A. Bailey is a member of the AHTA Magazine Work Team and is a graduate of the Horticultural Therapy Institute. She resides with her family in Franklin, TN.





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