

# AHTA

M A G A Z I N E

VOLUME 52 | ISSUE 2

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in Addiction Recovery

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HTR PROFILE

**Matthew  
Janson**

CTSR, HTR

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AHTA Magazine

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SUMMER 2024

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COVER PHOTO BY  
ETHAN ROBERTSON VIA [UNSPLASH.COM](https://unsplash.com)

# Editor's Words

PHOTO BY LINDA BROWN-KUHN

**T**he word “transformation” popped into my mind while biking on a towpath that runs along the Delaware River in Milford, NJ. I remember driving by in the winter seeing bare brown shale cliff walls on one side with clear views of the Delaware on the other. Now my view of the river is veiled by a riot of leafy vegetation. A green waterfall of vines spill down the rock wall, with trees rooted in small pockets of soil at dizzying heights, and wildflowers gracing everything (see photo above).

This is the time of the year when we get to experience this incredible transformation of plant growth with the people we work with no matter how grand or humble the setting. When you see the delight on the face of someone discovering a special bloom or tasting a sun-warmed cherry tomato that they planted, their joyful reactions make up for any less than perfect aspects of our jobs.

The feature story on page 4 looks at the ways that horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture (HT/TH) practitioners help



PHOTO BY LAURA BILLINGHAM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Linda  
Brown-  
Kuhn**

those dealing with substance use issues, inviting them to engage in the natural world with all its healing effects while on their difficult recovery journeys.

On page 19 you can learn about an amazing collaboration with the goal of training and supporting future generations of TH practitioners in Ukraine.

Don't miss AHTA Annual Conference updates on page 9. And the HT program spotlight on page 10 features three gardens/farms that are part of the pre-conference tours on October 17.

Although this season is probably our busiest, remember to lean into the wonder of nature's transformations – for yourself and for those you guide.

**Linda**



# Horticultural Therapy in Addiction Recovery

INTRODUCTION BY  
Kelly Warnick, HTR

Addiction is a complex and multifaceted condition increasingly impacting millions of people worldwide. It is marked by a compulsive pursuit of rewarding stimuli, even in the face of negative consequences. Whether addiction involves substances like alcohol and drugs or behaviors such as gambling and internet use, it affects not only the individual but also their families and communities. Because of the long-standing stigma surrounding addiction and mental health, individuals struggling with addiction often downplay or conceal their issues and hesitate to seek help. "The stigma is profound," comments Keith Whyte, Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gaming.<sup>1</sup>

Addiction is often mistakenly seen as merely a choice or a test of willpower. The common belief is that one should be able to stop the addiction simply by exercising more control over their behavior. However, this perception is far from the truth. "Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry."<sup>2</sup> The composition of an addicted brain will begin to undergo visual and physiological changes as the pleasure-producing agent causes dopamine spikes which progressively "hijack"

the brain. Over time, neural circuitry is rewired, making the brain dependent on the pleasure-producing agent for daily functioning. This physiological need becomes deeply embedded due to the rewiring of brain circuits, and treatment typically involves a long and arduous process of reconfiguring these neural pathways.<sup>3</sup>

While each individual undergoing treatment requires a range of diverse components to their treatment plan, incorporating opportunities for connection is essential. Author Johann Hari believes, "the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection."<sup>4</sup> He explains that at the core of all types of addiction is an inability to connect and engage with a sense of purpose in life. He highlights that a common experience for individuals affected by addiction is a profound sense of isolation. Individuals often resort to pleasure-producing behaviors to numb the pain of disconnection. Thus, to overcome addiction and transform one's life, opportunities for connection must be regularly integrated into the treatment plan. This is where horticultural therapy can make a profound difference in the patient's recovery trajectory.

## THE PREVALENCE OF ADDICTIONS

**46.8  
million**

Americans (ages 12 and older) battled a substance use disorder the past year.<sup>5</sup>

**21.5  
million**

U.S. adults suffered from both a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder the past year.<sup>5</sup>

## REFERENCES

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# Ukiah Recovery Center, California

BY Carolyn Brown, HTI Horticultural Therapy Intern



Ukiah Recovery Center herb garden.  
PHOTO BY CAROLYN BROWN

I began my horticultural therapy (HT) internship in 2023 after nine years of gardening with clients at the Ukiah Recovery Center (URC). URC is a residential, abstinence-based treatment program dedicated to assisting the addicted and homeless of Mendocino County to attain sobriety and improve self-sufficiency. URC offers 30-, 60-, and 90-day residential care. Addiction can be a very difficult disease to put in remission especially for those living in compromised circumstances and possibly suffering from

mental health issues as well.

URC's HT program includes weekly group sessions and individual sessions. Weekly HT includes a 50-minute classroom session in which we practice meditation and engage in an interactive sensory or mindfulness-based activity. After a short break, clients participate in 50 minutes of garden-based activities in our vegetable, flower, fruit and herb gardens. A variety of activities are offered that meet the clients' physical abilities and interest levels. At the beginning of each session, I ask the clients to write down two or three of their wellness goals for recovery and to think of one thing that they could work on during the gardening session to move towards one of their goals. At the end of the session, I have them rate their progress and reflect on something that may or may not have helped them. The questions are open-ended. The following qualitative data was collected over approximately a 6-month period of weekly sessions with an average

of 20 people per session, and 452 surveys were collected and tabulated.

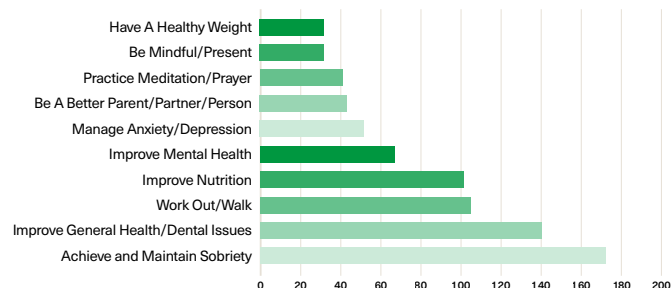
While these surveys were not set up to collect quantitative data, I feel that these client responses demonstrated that weekly horticultural therapy sessions can be beneficial to many during addiction recovery.



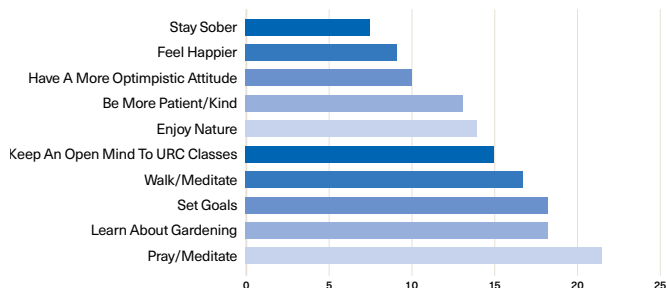
Client-made bouquets for community spaces.  
PHOTO BY CAROLYN BROWN

## SURVEY RESULTS

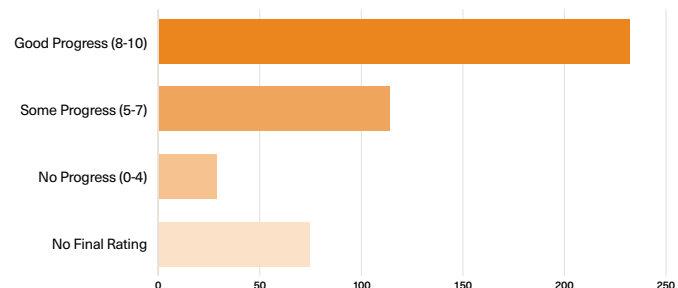
### Top Ten Long Term Wellness Goals for Recovery



### Top Ten Things One Could Work on Today



### Client Ratings of Their Progress on a Goal During the Gardening Session



### Client responses to the question, "What helped in today's HT session?"

"Just being outside and able to see the outdoors and life all around me."

"Reminded me of what and who I used to be."

"I love gardening it touches my soul."

"Gave me something to do that's active and able to share my skills, meditative."

"Teamwork. Guidance from each other was nice."

"Not sure. But something was lifted off me."

"I hate weeding."

# Center for Great Expectations, New Jersey

BY Linda Brown-Kuhn



*CGE's garden at midsummer.*  
PHOTO BY ALTHEA MACDONALD

**T**he Center for Great Expectations in Somerset, New Jersey, has been guiding young women through their addiction recovery journeys for more than 25 years. Althea MacDonald, MA, LPC, HTR, began the horticultural therapy (HT) program in 2017 with flower-filled containers on the front porch of the residential house the women live in as well as a small backyard garden that has expanded over the years.

Besides dealing with substance use issues, the women accepted into this Mommy & Me program are homeless and are pregnant or parenting. They typically are also involved with the child welfare system. They navigate through a four-phase trauma-informed program that includes: individual and group sessions; participation in a 12-step program with a sponsor; art and music therapy as well as HT. There

is room for eight women and their young children in the house where they typically stay for six to nine months.

I joined MacDonald in 2018. We run a 90-minute weekly HT program from May until November. Much of the time is spent outdoors but we do indoor plant-based activities as well. We also include educational handouts to enhance what they learn.

Many of the women arrive with poor self-esteem and low self-confidence. Most do not have much experience gardening or growing plants. As they learn new skills, their confidence begins to grow. When we asked one woman to show a newer member how to deadhead or transplant a seedling, you can see their self-assurance start to bud as the student becomes the teacher.

Our hope is that the women's gains in the garden keep multiplying. A truism from Joel Flagler, the head of the HT program at Rutgers University when I attended, comes to mind. He always said, "Success with plants leads to other successes."

I also believe that slowing to nature's pace and rhythm helps this group to heal in multiple ways. The garden teaches patience, taking them away from an instant gratification mindset, making them wait and work for the harvest. The physical tasks of growing and maintaining a garden call for attention and focus which require the women to be present, not thinking about past traumas or future problems. Women have told us that weeding is calming. Some find solace in watering, while others become immersed in snipping flowers off herbs.

Tending their garden requires the women to take responsibility and they sometimes learn the consequences of not watering. But they also experience the joys of blooms, growth, and eating organic veggies they picked themselves when they take good care of the garden.

Looking toward their futures, the skills learned through HT in growing and caring for plants represent a healthy, lifelong activity that these women can also undertake with their children.



*A participant holds up the first squash harvested in this year's garden.*  
PHOTO BY ALTHEA MACDONALD



*Trying their hand at arranging flowers from the garden.*  
PHOTO BY LINDA BROWN-KUHN



PHOTO BY MATTHEW JANSON

INTERVIEWED BY  
**Linda Brown-Kuhn**

**T**ell us about your background and education. Have you always worked in the field of horticultural therapy?

I have not always worked in horticultural therapy. I started in the therapeutic field, working in direct care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I fell in love with the job but wanted to do more with the individual participants. After the military, I wanted to have a job that was fulfilling. I got my BS in Recreational Therapy from Old Dominion University and, after graduation, worked on building therapeutic programs with day treatment facilities in Virginia Beach. When my active-duty military spouse was transferred to Philadelphia, I started working at a behavioral health hospital in New Jersey, where I met my first horticultural therapist and future internship supervisor, Gary Altman. Loving gardening myself, I thought it was the most amazing treatment modality.

**How did you get your start in horticultural therapy? When did you become a horticultural therapist?**

I didn't take the step into the horticultural therapy world until I worked at the Boston Veterans Administration (VA). Their most recent HTR retired, and the VA elected not

## HTR PROFILE

# Matthew Janson

## CTRS, HTR

to fill the position. My department inherited the large greenhouse and farm grounds. Seeing the potential, I proposed restarting a new HT program, and I pursued my HTR to get it off the ground. I went through the HTI certificate program and applied for my HTR in 2021.

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

My interest in sustainable food production is what got me to build my first 3'x8' 100-gallon aquaponics garden in my third-floor apartment in college. I was inspired to learn the science behind the mini-ecosystem. It was this that made me realize I enjoyed gardening. It was my hook. I like to find that with my patients. There are so many opportunities in the garden; I really enjoy finding the therapeutic activity that meets an individual's interest and addresses their therapeutic goals.

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

My experience developing a career in HT may be the same as a lot of other HTRs. I entered the therapeutic world through another modality and discovered HT in the process. I had some trouble finding courses but got lucky with a great internship supervisor.

**Are you conducting any research in horticultural therapy? Can you tell us your research focus?**

I am not doing any research, but I would

love to see more research in the field targeting specific populations with specific activities. Do succulent arrangements work better with veterans suffering from PTSD or individuals in hospice? Does compost education work best with clients working through substance abuse or individuals learning to adapt to a new physical disability? Questions like those really interest me.

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

Second to directly working with clients and seeing their progress, programming has always been one of my favorite parts of being a horticultural therapist. I found that in developing evidence-based programs for horticultural therapy, my favorite resources were the librarians that worked for the VA. I, like all HTRs, repeat familiar activities and programs with populations and clients, but when I'm building an evidence-based program from scratch, I reach out to the professionals to help find relevant articles and evidence shown to work for the populations and clients with which I am currently working. These professionals never disappointed me in finding obscure research in various fields from vermiculture to permaculture. If there was an article about the therapeutic benefit, they were always able to find it.

**How did HT develop at your facility and what**

## is the present status of this program?

Our biggest success in developing our program was finding mutual support and services among other departments. This included co-treatments, in-services, and what became our most successful program—working with the hospital kitchen to provide organic farm to table vegetables. Building community support throughout the hospital is always key to a facility horticulture program. Unfortunately, due to my spouse transferring to Sault Ste Marie, MI, I have left the Boston VA. These things happen and can kill a program. Excitingly though, I heard that due to what we started and the overwhelming support from the veteran community and multiple departments, they are in the process of trying to find funds to hire a full time HTR.

## Do you have some favorite plants and activities you use in your HT programs?

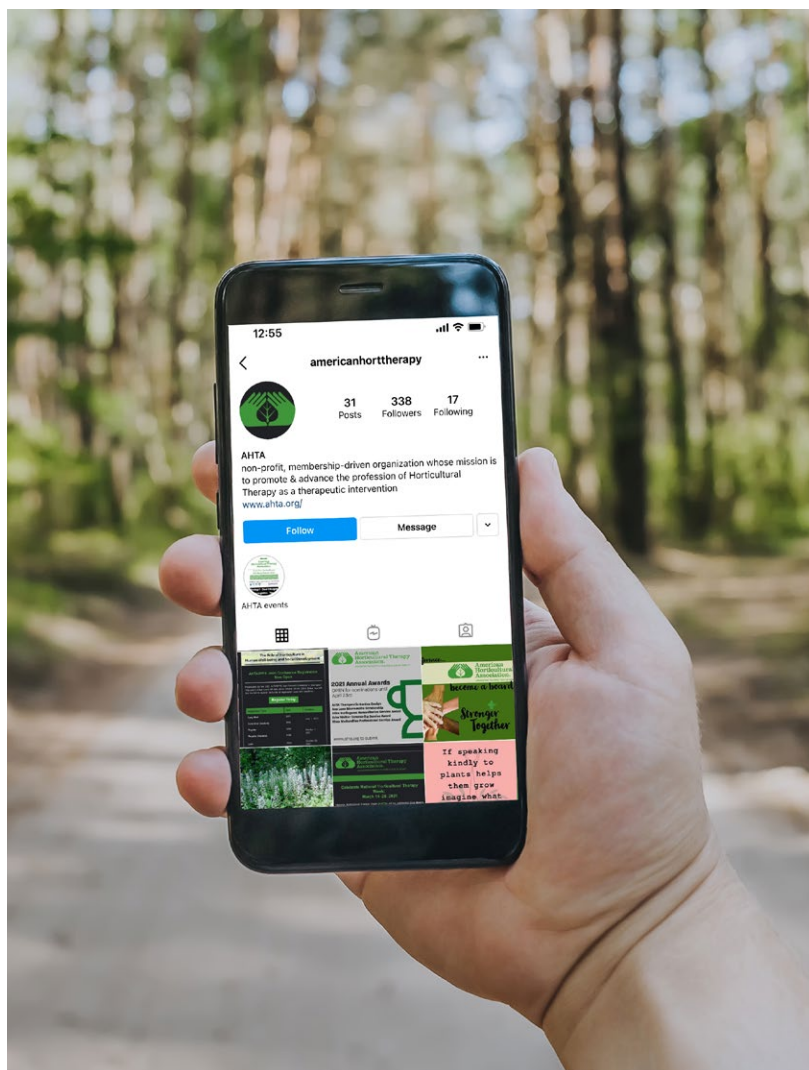
My favorite activity I did with veterans was topiary sculptures and flower arrangements. Local funeral homes donated flowers to the VA. The veterans would re-purpose the flowers into new arrangements and then talk about their choices and the meaning behind what they did. The topiary sculptures were projects we did with individuals finishing their substance use program. It created a fun analogy about staying on the program and guiding your vine back onto the sculpture if it started to grow apart from it.

## Do you accept HT Interns? How does your internship work at your facility?

The VA does accept interns, but it is ultimately up to the individual therapist. I did not have any interns while I was at the VA.

## Do you have personal perspectives to share with present or future horticultural therapists?

Get involved so you can add your voice to advocating for therapeutic horticulture. The horticultural therapy world is growing. In this post COVID world, impacted by climate change, so many people are seeing the therapeutic and important benefits of nature-based therapy. If you're interested in participating in the process, join a work team or even the board of directors.



# Connect with AHTA

## AHTA Social Media Outlets



Click the icons to check out the various ways to stay in touch with AHTA.



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

# Conference Update

BY Sara Rodriguez, LMFT

The 2024 AHTA Annual Conference, *Collective Effervescence: Honoring Collaboration in Times of Change*, located in Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina, is quickly approaching. As such, exciting updates and information continue to be made available to attendees. The conference will take place October 18-19, 2024, and will include two Keynote Speakers, an array of 60-minute presentations, 90-minute workshops, roundtable discussions, poster presentations, networking opportunities, and more.

We are happy to announce that registration for the conference is officially open.

AHTA is also offering an amazing opportunity for professionally registered horticultural therapists on Thursday, October 17. We are honored to welcome the Internship Supervisor Workshop. This six-hour course will be facilitated by Leigh-Ann Starling, LCPC,

CRC, HTR and Gary Altman, LAC, CRC, CVE, HTR. This course is intended for HTRs who have been professionally registered for at least one year and have an interest in supervising Horticultural Therapy interns. Sign up for this workshop when you register for the conference. (See page 12 for details).

We are already gaining energy and knowledge simply from making connections while preparing for the conference. We are connecting to speakers as they are added to the schedule with exciting wisdom to share; connecting to tour sites as we learn more about the wonderful people who tend to these farms/gardens and the practices used at the sites; connecting to ourselves and our environments.

We truly hope to see you in North Carolina!



CLICK HERE TO FIND MORE REGISTRATION INFORMATION ON THE AHTA WEBSITE

Dorothea Dix Park in Raleigh.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF [WWW.VISITNC.COM](http://WWW.VISITNC.COM)



## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

# AHTA 2024 Conference

*Highlighting Tour Sites in  
Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina*

BY **Sara Rodriguez, LMFT**

**I**t was an honor to connect with some of the tour sites and learn about the people and the land before attendees have an opportunity to be immersed in the sights, sounds and sensations of these green spaces. Please consider joining us for the pre-tours on Thursday, October 17th, and enjoy the following highlights from three of the site options.

## Hawk's Nest Healing Garden

Hector Lopez, healer, teacher, farmer and more, of Hawk's Nest Healing Garden, spoke with us about his farm, and the process of bringing his vision to fruition. "Growing food is a way to empower people," reports Hector, and teaching through a lens of organic agriculture and permaculture is vital on the 1.3-acre farm that he started about four years ago. The farm was established during the peak of the pandemic in 2020, providing a time to address growth and foundation. Creating fencing on the site, establishing medicine and vegetable gardens, and purchasing chickens were some of the initial accomplishments. Additionally, a composting toilet was built, lumber production established, spaces designated for camping, and an irrigation system completed.

With a deep understanding of the importance of culture and spirituality, Hector serves the community as a healer and honors the importance of interconnections and reciprocal relationships in our lives, and in the garden. He acknowledges the reality that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals experience high levels of intergenerational trauma, however, "the farm has a place in the healing process." While Hawk's Nest Healing Garden is there to serve all community members, their primary focus is on BIPOC individuals, children, veterans and Indigenous people. Hector welcomes us to his site and reminds us, "we are here to heal our bodies, the soil and the community."

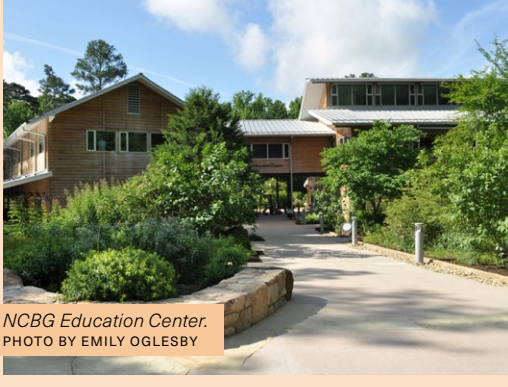


*The medicine garden.*  
PHOTO BY HECTOR LOPEZ



*Garden as therapy.*  
PHOTO BY  
HECTOR LOPEZ

## North Carolina Botanical Gardens (NCBG) UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA



NCBG Education Center.  
PHOTO BY EMILY OGLESBY



Venus Fly Traps –  
Native to North Carolina.  
PHOTO BY EMILY OGLESBY

Emilee Weaver, professional horticulturist and Therapeutic Horticulture Program Manager at the North Carolina Botanical Garden (NCBG), provided some information about the botanical garden she and others tend. NCBG is considered a leader in conservation and has been set up to focus on education, with an emphasis on the importance of native plants. For 51 years, the botanical garden has utilized horticultural therapy/therapeutic horticulture (HT/TH) in the community. Programming ranges from online or hybrid TH programs (created in collaboration with the University of North Carolina), to therapeutic garden design consultations, collaborations with local farms, a children's camp, and services for older adults in assisted living facilities.

While there are no direct services in the garden itself, staff members go into the community. "Programming is most effective when we go to the populations," states Weaver. A future goal of the NCBG is to have direct HT/TH services offered on site." Currently, the population served primarily consists of schools, children and older adults. Individuals who have severe and persistent mental illness, as well those who have experienced first symptoms of psychosis are also primary consumers of the HT/TH services the botanical garden offers.

A unique feature of NCBG is its inhabitants, "We have an extensive carnivorous plant collection," Weaver notes. What a way to capture the attention of patrons, with one of the most unique plants and hunters in North Carolina!

## Farm at Penny Lane

Emilee Weaver also provided us with information about the University of North Carolina's Farm at Penny Lane, a 40-acre site established in 2011. This farm was developed with an understanding that nature-based and animal-based therapies are incredibly effective means to assist individuals in improving their wellness and recovery.

The farm has weekly programming including cooking, art, music, writing, farming, and harvesting. The Heartbeet Garden supports adults who are experiencing severe and persistent mental health concerns, "allowing them to harvest and take home what they grow." Additionally, the Green Team vocational program supports the community by showcasing a variety of careers and roles that green spaces and agriculture have to offer. Direct horticultural therapy services, resume writing, and development of coping skills are areas of focus to encourage symptom management in the community. To support accessibility and inclusion, Penny Lane has partnered with a local church to provide free transportation from a popular farmers market to Penny Lane. This alliance opens opportunities to experience the benefits of the farm to those who may not otherwise have access.



Farm at Penny Lane  
production field.  
PHOTO BY  
EMILEE WEAVER



TH group enjoying the  
programming pavilion.  
PHOTO BY EMILEE WEAVER



Click here to find  
out more information  
about the AHTA 2024  
Pre-Conference Tours.

# AHTA Internship Supervisor Workshop

## About the Workshop

### DATE

October 17, 2024

### DURATION

6 hours

### INTENDED AUDIENCE

HTRs who have been registered at least 1-year and are currently supervising, or are interested in supervising HT interns

### TOPICS COVERED

-  Enhancing and/or increasing your role as an intern supervisor
-  Providing an effective and rewarding supervision experience for the intern
-  Facilitating the goals and project requirement of an internship
-  Clinical and professional responsibilities of the supervisor
-  Professional ethics and the ethical challenges of supervision
-  Tools to improve and organize supervision of horticultural therapy interns

### COST

\$75

Fee will cover handouts, the Internship Supervisor's Manual, and lunch.

*Pre-registration is required.*

*Register with your conference registration.*

BY Leigh Anne Starling, LCPC, CRC, HTR

One of the most important ways to contribute to the success of the horticultural therapy profession is to be an internship supervisor. Horticultural therapy supervision is essential to the profession itself. Horticultural therapy internship supervision requires specific skills and abilities necessary to balance competing demands between providing client services while supporting the horticultural therapy intern. As professionals, horticultural therapy intern supervisors work with a substantially greater level of autonomy. Because of the specialized nature of the profession, the internship supervisors are positioned to ensure the standards of the profession are maintained.

The American Horticultural Therapy Association will sponsor an Internship Supervisor Workshop on Thursday, October 17, 2024. Registration is open to Professionally Registered Horticultural Therapists (HTR) who have been registered for a minimum of 1-year and are currently

supervising, or are interested in supervising, horticultural therapy interns.

This workshop will cover the requirements of the horticultural therapy internship and the importance of clinical supervision to the horticultural therapy intern and the profession. The morning session will review and discuss the supervisor's professional role to assure the intern fulfills the internship goals, completes the required projects, and develops and documents the required case study. Attendees will learn strategies to facilitate the internship goals when supervising onsite, off-site, or online. The afternoon session will dive into the supervisor's clinical role and discuss different supervision models for teaching, assessing, and evaluating the skills and abilities of the intern as a therapist. Attendees will also explore and discuss ethical dilemmas that happen during internship supervision.



### MEET THE FACILITATORS

**Leigh Anne Starling, LCPC, CRC, HTR**, is a workshop co-facilitator.

Leigh Anne is a licensed clinical counselor, certified rehabilitation counselor, and has been an HTR for over 30 years during which time she has supervised many interns. In collaboration with AHTA in 2014, she developed the workshop to provide a professional resource for supervisors and has presented the workshop at several AHTA conferences.

**Gary Altman, LAC, CRC, CVE, HTR**, is a workshop co-facilitator. Gary is a licensed counselor, certified rehabilitation counselor and vocational evaluator, and has been an HTR for 8 years. He is the Teaching Instructor and Director of the Horticultural Therapy Program at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Gary is a PhD Candidate in the Rutgers University Psychiatric Rehabilitation - Counselor Education and Supervision Track program and actively supervises horticultural therapy interns.

# Updates from AHTA

BY

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

**A**s of July 1, 2024, AHTA has moved its management to Revolution AMC. The AHTA Board of Directors is excited about this change to [Revolution AMC](#) as they bring expertise of exam development. AHTA continues to move towards exam development, and now, with Revolution's support, the process is being realized. The AHTA Board of Directors supports exam development, and our membership agrees. Here is a fun fact: Did you know that there was a sample horticultural therapy certification exam for horticultural therapists presented at the Horticultural Therapy Professional Development Symposium in 1990, sponsored by Kansas State University and the Menninger Foundation? One of the “roots” of this process!

## ANNOUNCING THE THP, THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE PRACTITIONER

**T**he American Horticultural Therapy Association recognizes the practice of therapeutic horticulture is becoming a widely accepted and important component in healthcare, rehabilitation, residential programs, and community settings. The AHTA is pleased to announce that the new professional credential, Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner (THP), is

now available for applications! The Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner is intended for practitioners who provide services aligned with the AHTA definition of therapeutic horticulture.



Click here to find out more information regarding eligibility requirements and the application process.



IN MEMORIAM

# AHTA Pays Tribute to an Icon of Horticultural Therapy

**I**n June of this year, we lost an icon in the field of horticultural therapy. Nancy Chambers came into the field as a pioneer and blazed the way for many of our rewarding careers, bringing the benefits of plants and nature to those who need it the most. Nancy's daughter, Ruth, shared career advice she was given by her mother: "Find something you are passionate about that allows you to give back and do it. It will provide for you." Nancy embraced this advice every day.



Nancy created her first position in horticultural therapy at Essex County Psychiatric Hospital in the late 70's. However, the largest part of her legacy lies in her work at the Glass Garden at NYU Langone Medical Center's Rusk Institute. Nancy became the director of the Enid A. Haupt Glass Garden in 1986, and she developed the garden and its innovative programming over the next 26 years. Shortly after her arrival, Nancy spearheaded the installation of a fully accessible perennial garden in a previously underutilized space between the garden and surrounding buildings. Nancy was able to hire additional qualified staff, allowing the Glass Garden to provide more services to the patients at Rusk, NYU Hospital and even support outreach to the community.

Nancy and her team developed the garden, adding extensive plant collections and interpretive signage to the greenhouse. She oversaw the addition of birds, a cat, a koi pond, and therapy bunnies. Nancy had the Glass Garden recognized as a public botanical garden, making it an important bridge between the medical center and the community.

One of her next biggest accomplishments happened when Nancy and the therapists at the Glass Garden sought to redevelop a playground located next to the greenhouse. The result of the collaborative process was the award-winning NYU Children's PlayGarden. The PlayGarden provided a connection to nature for children both in the hospital and the community. Nancy took it even further by having a Budding Gardeners program - an annual children's festival in the PlayGarden where she brought in farm animals and clowns to entertain and educate the children.

By the time she retired in 2012, Nancy and her team had trained over 75 horticultural therapists, horticulturists, and vocational trainees. She stayed active in her retirement by continuing her teaching and serving both MAHTN and the AHTA. Nancy has influenced the lives of the majority of us in the world of horticultural therapy, leaving an indelible mark on the field and in the hearts of those she touched.

Thanks to the Mid-Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network (MAHTN) for allowing the magazine to reprint this tribute which appeared in MAHTN's July newsletter.



# When Nature Threatens

## *Approaches to Leading Horticultural Therapy in Hot Weather*

BY Andrew Zeiger, M.D.

Summer weather provides an opportunity to reflect on how horticultural therapy (HT) can continue to be done, even in sweltering temperatures. Although heat comes with inherent risks, HT can be adapted to empower participants in creating a healthier relationship with the natural world.

Participant and therapist safety during an HT session is of primary concern. Extreme heat can have serious health consequences, including medication complications, dehydration, muscle cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and worsening of pre-existing health conditions.<sup>1</sup> Any symptom (figure 1A to the right) represents a significant health risk that must be immediately addressed.<sup>1,2</sup> The goal, then, is to prevent heat-related illness.

Adapting an HT activity to high temperatures can be challenging. One approach, described in *Horticultural*

*Therapy Methods*,<sup>3</sup> is for the therapist to adjust how they lead the group. There are three main styles of group leadership: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Authoritarian leadership exhibits tight control and supervision. Democratic leadership presents a task, provides choice, and facilitates decision-making. The laissez-faire style has minimal leader direction,

allowing individuals to decide and act on their own.

Comfort with these styles allows the therapist to meet the heat in front of them (figure 1B on page 18). Imagine you work in a rehabilitation hospital, it is 1:45 PM,

**FIGURE 1A – SYMPTOMS OF HEAT RELATED ILLNESS**

*If any are present, move person to cool or shaded place and begin medical care.<sup>2</sup>*

TYPE	SYMPTOMS
<b>Edema</b>	<i>Extremity swelling, facial swelling or flushing</i>
<b>Cramps</b>	<i>Muscle spasms, moist and cool skin, normal body temperature</i>
<b>Rash</b>	<i>Eruption of red raised skin rash, especially on parts of body with higher moisture</i>
<b>Syncope</b>	<i>Lightheadedness, dizziness, confusion, orthostasis, transient loss of consciousness</i>
<b>Exhaustion</b>	<i>Thirst, headache, fatigue, high heart rate, weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cold and clammy skin, elevated temperature of 101°-104°F</i>
<b>Stroke</b>	<i>Altered mental status, seizures, coma, low blood pressure, fast and shallow breathing, sweating, core temperature ≥105°F</i>

PHOTO BY [WWW.FREEPIK.COM](http://WWW.FREEPIK.COM)

# Praise for Volunteers

**V**olunteers are the heart and soul of many horticultural therapy programs. Whether they are Master Gardeners, enthusiastic students, corporate groups, or members of community organizations like Rotary or garden clubs, these individuals offer invaluable support and expertise. Their contributions range from garden maintenance to program planning and implementation, all of which enhance the therapeutic experience and drive program success. The following examples celebrate the impact of volunteers, demonstrating how their efforts and dedication truly help our programs blossom.

## University of Tennessee Gardens

BY **Derrick Stowell**

The University of Tennessee Gardens' therapeutic programs utilize volunteers to help with a variety of tasks from program planning, horticulture management, to program implementation. The majority of our current volunteers are student interns completing their degrees in therapeutic recreation, or horticultural therapy interns. These volunteers bring new ideas and skills to help complement our programming. One important key for working with any volunteer is the assessment of their knowledge and skills so you can provide the appropriate training to help your volunteers and program succeed. This summer we offered our second year of Sow to Grow, and we were fortunate to have both student interns and current teachers volunteering with our program.



Volunteer working with a Sow to Grow participant to plant in our Grounding Garden.  
PHOTO BY UT GARDENS STAFF

### SIDEBAR

## Tips for Recruiting Volunteers to Your Program

By Mike Maddox, HTR, MS Horticulture  
MS Instructional Design and Learning Technology

1

### Motivate Them

Understanding potential volunteers' motivations is crucial. They may be driven by a desire to support a cause, learn new skills, meet new people, or connect with an organization. Highlight how your opportunities align with these motivations.

2

### Be Clear on Commitment

Provide a detailed job description that outlines duties, required skills, and time commitments. This helps potential volunteers determine if the role is a good fit.



Master Gardener, Diane Stephens, assists at a military child event at Hope Gardens.  
PHOTO BY DONNA HUNT

## Houston County Master Gardeners

BY Donna Hunt

From January until June of 2024, twelve core team Master Gardeners from Houston (HOW-ston) County have racked up over 1,000 hours volunteering in Hope Gardens at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. It is because of this dedication that we have been asked to partner with the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). The EFMP supports nearly 350 military families with children aged 5 to 18 who have physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities.

We depend heavily on the Master Gardeners because, without them, there would be no programs. Their knowledge of horticulture, combined with their teaching experience, is invaluable as we embark on this new chapter with EMFP.

## Project Grow at Allies, Inc.

BY MaryAnne McMillan & Kasey Hamilton

As a grant-funded program with limited resources, Project Grow at Allies, Inc. relies heavily on volunteers to thrive. We have been fortunate to host a diverse range of volunteers, including corporate groups who dedicate "workdays" to helping us tackle large tasks like garden prep and clean-up. Recently, we've partnered with Mercer County Community College's DREAM program, welcoming student volunteers interested in exploring horticulture as a career path. We also collaborate with two local high schools, offering pre-vocational programming to students with disabilities as they volunteer. These partnerships benefit both the students, who gain valuable hands-on experience, and our program, which receives essential support with ongoing garden maintenance.



Bristol Myers Squibb's "Helping Hands" volunteers assist with prepping the beds for the season.  
PHOTO BY MARYANNE MCMILLAN

3

### Set up Personal Meetings

Meet with potential volunteers to discuss the job description, understand their motivations, and get to know them. Explain your organization's mission, expectations, and culture. This ensures mutual compatibility.

4

### Offer a Variety of Opportunities

Offer diverse volunteer options. You might have scheduled group workdays or flexible times for individual work. Clarify how you will communicate about tasks and needs.

5

### Give Recognition

Acknowledge your volunteers' contributions. Recognition can be personalized, such as a handshake, a personal note, or a mention in a newsletter. Always provide timely, specific, and authentic positive feedback.

By following these tips, you can effectively recruit and retain motivated volunteers for your program.



85 degrees, and you are about to lead an HT session for a patient who recently suffered a stroke. They are steadily regaining function, saying that your sessions are an important part of their healing.

Consider the styles; all three are valid. The authoritarian voice reminds you to set strict safety requirements. Through the democratic lens you see a patient wrestling with their perception of autonomy; they may want a broad range of activity options. Laissez-faire reminds you to focus on the patient and work together to better understand their therapy goals.

Many of the people we serve are at higher risk of heat-related illness: older adults, people using health-related technology, those with chronic medical conditions.<sup>4</sup> We must not limit their access to nature on the basis of their vulnerability as long as access can be provided safely. Integrating multiple leadership approaches is one way to adapt HT to them.



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**FIGURE 1B – APPROACHES TO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE HT ACTIVITY IN HOT WEATHER**

STYLE	SELECT APPLICATION WITH EXAMPLES
<b>Authoritarian</b>	<p><b>Strict symptom safety.</b> Discuss symptoms of heat-related illness prior to starting and advise participant to alert provider immediately if any symptoms arise.</p> <p><b>Environmental requirements.</b> Factors in the environment that increase one's risk of heat-related illness include adequate breaks, access to shelter/shade, regular sips of water, high humidity, and high temperatures.<sup>2</sup> Online sources can help guide safety of temperature and relative humidity.<sup>5</sup></p> <p><b>Managing participant's risk factors prior to starting.</b> Discuss patient's unique risk factors for heat-related illness. For example, a person with diabetes who is sweating a lot is at higher risk of blood sugar disturbances.</p> <p><b>Facility policy.</b> Work with facility to ensure you are aligned with their policies. For example, some facilities may restrict outdoor time at particular temperatures.</p> <p><b>Personal limits.</b> You may have personal sensitivities. Set your limits and take care of yourself.</p>
<b>Democratic</b>	<p><b>Cultivate a diversity of garden locations.</b> Toggling between different garden microclimates allows you to maximize time in the garden in extreme weather. Great garden spaces for a hot day include under a shaded canopy, near a bustling water feature, or in a well-ventilated greenhouse.</p> <p><b>Hold space to consider options and discuss.</b> Some people may have strong emotional reactions to hot weather. Stimulate discussion to understand their needs and goals. Activities requiring less exertion may be favorable.</p> <p><b>Discuss the optimal zone of environmental press (EP).</b> EP represents the limiting or stimulating aspects of the environment. Adapting to an environment depends on the interaction between EP and the individual's competencies. Optimal EP occurs when the environment promotes reasonable challenge but does not frustrate. Decreasing EP in hot weather may include ready access to essentials such as water and seating.<sup>6</sup></p> <p><b>Map the weather together.</b> Cognitive problem solving in nature is a healthy way to stimulate and condition the brain. The government-run website, HeatRisk, shows your county's heat impact.<sup>7</sup></p> <p><b>Plan outdoor activities with participants for earlier or later in the day.</b></p>
<b>Laissez-faire</b>	<p><b>Prompt for reflection.</b> Sit in a shaded place to watch how the sun shines on the plants. Encourage participants to reflect on how their body feels in the heat.</p> <p><b>Provide wide variety of activity options adapted to hot weather.</b> Consider referring to the neurosequential model of therapeutics and horticultural activities, a technique of purposefully stimulating particular brain regions with targeted HT activities (e.g. designing a garden layout to stimulate cognitive problem solving in the brain's neocortex).<sup>6</sup></p> <p><b>Promote creativity.</b> For example, make music with garden instruments, such as bamboo poles and sand.</p> <p><b>Emphasize independence.</b> Useful when participant needs to set their own agenda. Allow individuals to safely explore the space.</p>

INTRODUCING OUR NEW SECTION

# News from Affiliates

*AHTA does not necessarily endorse the products and/or services in these articles which may differ from the standards aligned with the AHTA.*

# Bringing Healing Through Therapeutic Horticulture to Ukraine



*Distribution of Ukrainian botanical gardens will enable country-wide access to TH.*  
GRAPHIC BY TONY ALLISON

BY **Emilee Weaver & Sarah Tanke, HTR**

The Ukraine Project is a significant collaboration between the North Carolina Botanical Garden's (NCBG) Therapeutic Horticulture Program and the non-profit Partnerships for Nature (PN). The primary goal of this collaboration is to provide unprecedented online and in-person therapeutic horticulture education for twelve botanical gardens and clinical

facilities in Ukraine. The intent is to build their capacity to integrate plant and nature-based healing interventions into their current practices/sites and serve those affected by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

## Our Mission

The Ukraine project addresses Ukraine's

self-identified need for effective methods to alleviate psychological distress, promote resilience among the population, and to honor the rich cultural legacy of human/plant connection in Ukraine. Through continued TH webinars, the development of culturally appropriate resources, and consultation with a core group of Ukrainian partners, NCBG is 'training the trainers' who will be equipped



Ukrainian soldiers involved in a TH pilot program at Kryvyi Rih Botanical Garden.  
PHOTO BY TONY ALLISON



A TH-trained scientist-educator at Lviv University Botanical Garden conducts a program for Ukrainian refugee children.  
PHOTO BY TONY ALLISON

to train and support future generations of Ukrainian TH practitioners.

## TH Certificate Program Translation into Ukrainian

Starting with a request in 2022 from a single veteran rehabilitation hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine, who envisioned using TH to support military veterans, displaced families, and all others experiencing physical and psychological trauma, our first (of four) online TH courses has been translated into Ukrainian. This work was done thanks to a strong and tireless collaborative relationship between NCBG, PN, the NC State University Extension Gardener program, and a team of Ukrainian horticulturists/translators. The first online TH course will become accessible to our existing Ukrainian partners, as well as any Ukrainian-speaking person who has an internet connection in 2024. Within the next 1- 1.5 years, we hope to make translations for the remaining three courses available to Ukraine.

## TH Training in Action

Today, that initial seed of hope in

2022 has blossomed into a flourishing initiative that has empowered at least six Ukrainian botanical gardens to solicit input and develop TH programs in the spring of 2024. Partnerships for Nature has further facilitated connections between NCBG and the largest botanical garden in Armenia, the Yerevan botanical garden. NCBG has consulted with Yerevan botanical garden to design the first therapeutic garden in Armenia, which will be constructed by October 2024, to serve as a model for all other botanical gardens in Armenia, and to serve displaced children from the over 100,000 Armenian refugees in the country.

In September of 2024, Emilee Weaver, TH Program Manager of NCBG, and HT Amy Stidham will travel to Armenia and

then to Poland (near border of Ukraine) to provide 14 days of TH workshops, on-site consultation, and relationship-building endeavors. These initiatives are part of our broader goal to formalize therapeutic horticulture as a healing intervention in Ukraine and Armenia.

If you're interested in hearing how several Ukrainian botanical garden's have utilized our training to start TH programs of their own this spring, [click this link](#) to listen to a webinar, "Therapeutic Horticulture, a Nature-Based Response to War-Related Trauma" that took place on August 8, 2024.



Click here to learn more about these international projects.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Emilee Weaver** is the Therapeutic Horticulture Program Manager at the NC Botanical Garden. HT Certificate from HTI, content creator and instructor for NCBG/NC SU collaborative Online and Hybrid Certificates in Therapeutic Horticulture.

**Sarah Tanke, HTR**, serves as Therapeutic Horticulture Community Engagement Specialist at the NC Botanical Garden. HT/TH direct service provider and HT/TH educator. HT training through the University of Florida.



PHOTO BY CONNIE FUNG

# Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture Publishes New Book on Horticultural Therapy and Life Education

BY **Nicolson Yat-Fan SIU & June Kit-Ming LAU**

guide on how HT can be utilized to support personal growth, emotional well-being, and life skills development.

"We are thrilled to release this valuable resource to the community," said Connie Fung, President of the Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture. "Horticultural therapy has proven to be a powerful tool in promoting holistic well-being, and we believe this book will help to further the understanding and adoption of HT in life education programs across Hong Kong."

The book launch ceremony was held on July 14, 2024, at the Ming Hua Hall in the headquarters of St. James' Settlement. The event was a tremendous success, with the audience celebrating the launch with great enthusiasm and applause. The panel discussion with the authors and editors, as well as the hands-on HT demonstration, were both well-received by the attendees.

The publication of this book has also garnered praise and congratulations from horticultural therapists around the world. They recognize the significance of promoting life education through the lens of HT, as the plant cycle and its symbolic meaning of the life cycle can be a powerful tool in guiding individuals through their own personal growth and development. As the Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture continues to lead the way in promoting HT among Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and China, this publication stands

as a testament to our dedication and a valuable resource for those seeking to enrich the lives of individuals through the transformative power of plants.



For more information about the book, please visit the [Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture's website](https://www.hkath.org/).



Connie's presentation at the book launch ceremony  
PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNIE FUNG



New book signing at the book launch ceremony, 14 July 2024.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNIE FUNG

The Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture is proud to announce the publication of a new book in Chinese, *Horticultural Therapy: Connecting Plants with Life* written by the Association's President, Connie Yuen-Yee FUNG and Nicole Hoi-Ling CHOW, Registered Psychotherapist, Ontario, Canada. The book has been edited and translated by the Association's Secretary Hon-Sum KWOK and Vice-President, Brenda Suk-Kwan LEUNG. It was published by Crystal Window Books, Hong Kong.

The book aims to promote the use of Horticultural Therapy (HT) in life education programs in Hong Kong. By presenting various treatment cases, parent-child stories, and simple interactive gardening activities, it provides an explanation of the principles and applications of horticultural therapy for daily use in a clear and accessible manner. Comparing the life cycle of plants to human life, it guides readers to experience the meaning of life and its connection to nature. In recent years, there has been a growing need for effective life education, especially among the city's teenagers. This new publication seeks to provide therapists, educators, and the general public with a comprehensive

## ACTIVITY

# Terrariums that Teach

BY **Holly Harrison**

**T**errariums are a timeless gardening and horticultural therapy activity that can be enjoyed by all ages and abilities, in a variety of settings. I've facilitated terrarium building over the last 15 years, even before my time in the HT profession. They are a great introduction to the gardening world for non-gardeners and are a great activity for the cold wet months of winter, when gardening outdoors is not really an option.

I particularly like terrariums as a therapeutic tool in a Substance Use Disorders (SUD) support group setting. Terrariums can

be used as a metaphorical framework for managing and maintaining sobriety. If you just throw everything into the terrarium at once, it's a giant mess and your plants won't live. By properly layering the pea gravel, charcoal, soil and accurately planting your plants, you create a healthy environment for your plants to grow and thrive and there is room for fun, beautiful, whimsical decorations, and accessories.



*Terrarium layers.*  
PHOTO BY  
HOLLY HARRISON

## You'll need...

### TOOLS

- Spoon
- Paper towels
- Small paint brush
- Glass cleaner

### MATERIALS

- Open glass container with no drainage holes (Mason jars, old fish tanks, glass cookie jars, vases, recycled jars)
- Pea gravel
- Horticultural charcoal
- Potting soil (sterile)
- Decorative glass, moss, sand, and rock
- Small plants

### PLANTS TO USE

- **Succulents:** Cacti, Echeveria, Gasteria, Haworthia, Hens and Chicks, Jade, Sedums, String of Pearls
- **Low-light plants:** African Violet, Begonia, Creeping Fig, Fittonia, Ferns, Maranta, Peperomia, Polka Dot Plant, Pothos, Selaginella Moss, Syngonium

## Instructions

- 1. Glass container:** Choose your terrarium glass container. Clean your glass (depending on your client population, you may want to do this ahead of time).
- 2. Pea Gravel:** Add a 2-inch pea gravel layer to the bottom.
- 3. Horticultural Charcoal:** Add a ½ inch layer of horticultural charcoal on top of the pea gravel.
- 4. Potting Soil:** Add a 1-to-3-inch layer of potting soil to your terrarium (depends on the size your plant's roots).
- 5. Placement & Plant:** Using a spoon, dig holes for your plants. Place the plant's roots in the hole and cover the roots with soil. Repeat this process until all the plants have a home. Be sure not to overcrowd your plants. Clean up any charcoal, gravel or soil dust with by using a paint brush.
- 6. Decorate:** Cover the potting soil with decorative rock, sand, or glass. Repeat the clean-up process if you have any wayward rock, sand or glass.
- 7. Accessorize:** Add accessories (moss, wood rounds, and other tiny items).
- 8. Water:** Lightly water your terrarium. About a teaspoon to tablespoon of water at the base of every plant. Be sure not to overwater your terrarium. Watering needs will depend on the type of plants and location of terrarium.



*Inner worlds of succulent terrariums.*  
PHOTO BY HOLLY HARRISON

## How to care for your terrarium

Place your terrarium near a natural light source, but not in direct light. If natural light is limited, you can place your terrarium under a lamp with a full spectrum bulb.

# The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year

By Margaret Renkl

REVIEW BY  
**Karin A. Bailey**

**T**he *Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year* is a true gift of short essays by author and New York Times contributing opinion writer Margaret Renkl, who also wrote *Late Migrations: A Natural History of Love and Loss* and *Graceland, At Last: Notes on Hope and Heartache from the American South*. The book conveys Renkl's observations of her Middle Tennessee home environment, the need to pause and take in nature, the importance of making connections with the natural world, and the many similarities humans have with wildlife. Many wonders are experienced and shared through her writings, such as the anticipation of witnessing the rare and fleeting bloom of cereus, as well as the life and death realities that occur in her garden. The crow, which is not usually thought of as an enamored bird, has been given an honored place in the title, as well as the distinction of Renkl's kindred soul from which she derives comfort.

For each of the seasons, weekly entries are accompanied by fifty-two stunning illustrations by the author's brother, Billy Renkl, who also resides in Tennessee.

Each weekly essay is introduced by a quote from other writers, and Praise Songs are included throughout to remind us that there are no mistakes in nature, and we have much to learn by heightening our observations.

At times, the short essays reflect the dark side of progress, her frustrations regarding unsafe horticultural practices, and the effects of climate change on nature and its inhabitants.



PHOTO BY KARIN A. BAILEY

She reveals her personal pain and joy through documenting the vulnerability and resiliency of our natural world, and she reminds us of our obligation to protect it. The essays also show connections with family, friends, and neighbors as she celebrates creatures "loved and unloved" that lurk in her garden.

For residents of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland Plateau area, beloved landmarks and wildlife species described in the book are immediately recognizable, and there is a shared concern for the ever-changing landscape of this region. However, all readers

can empathize with her experiences and find a connection with her kindred crow. As humans and other species share the experience of loss, grief, and being misunderstood, they also share the power of observation, a playful and mischievous spirit, and living life in the moment where everything is connected. Through her writings, Renkl reminds us of these similarities while she urges us to take a pause and observe nature's many wonders.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Karin A. Bailey** is a member of the AHTA Magazine Work Team, a recent graduate of the Horticultural Therapy Institute, and she is pursuing a degree in Horticulture at Colorado State University. A long-time Middle Tennessee resident, she resides with her family in Franklin.

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**October 14, 2024**

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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