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## Benefits of gardens on human health and well-being

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**Statement of Problem:** Gardening and garden related activities gain ground in learning and health promotion. Two main questions occurred: In which ways do gardens and places provide well-being and health? To what extent are activities (gardening or social interaction) relevant to promote well-being and health? Aim of this study is to find out benefits of gardens on human health and well-being.

**Method:** Using electronic databases, a comprehensive search of peer reviewed papers published between 1980 and November 2015 was conducted.

**Results & Discussion:** The reviewed papers showed that no clear separable answer for the main questions is possible, a highly complex interaction exists, and place and activity interact strongly. Research on private gardens is dedicated to all population groups. Existing research shows that private gardening is healthy for older persons. It is a meaningful activity that can be matched to the physical and psychological ability. Garden and nature activate and relax body and mind; research on community gardens focuses on interactive, communicative and connecting mechanisms while gardening for local food production; research on school grounds is related to the effects on school performance and their eating habits. Positive effects could be described; the main task of healing gardens is the promotion of intellectual and physical health, well-being and quality of life. Mainly positive outputs have been described, but persons with dementia can show negative effects as well. Physical benefits include higher levels of physical activity, better motor skills, and healthier nutrition behavior. Mental benefits include reduced mental stress, improved mood, better cognitive functioning, experienced achievement, and development and maintenance of identity in the garden. Social benefits include sharing knowledge and produce, better learning, feelings of social cohesion, and community involvement. These positive findings encourage application of garden-based-interventions.

**Recommendations:** The given body of knowledge encourages practical applications of garden-related interventions. These interventions should be planned with care and evaluated using established methods.

## Biography

Birgit Steininger has her expertise in Horticultural Therapy and Green Care. Developing the field of Horticultural Therapy and Green Care in Austria, she developed a University Certificate Degree in Horticultural Therapy and a Master's Degree "Green Care: pedagogic, consultative and therapeutic Interventions with Animals and Plants". Connecting agriculture and horticulture with human health and well-being as well as teaching and establishing research is the focus of her work at Agrarian and Environmental University College Vienna.

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## Notes: