

The Ernesta Ballard Healing Garden at the Temple University Ambler Arboretum. Research, design and evaluation.

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The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of healing landscape philosophies; to locate the Healing Garden at Temple University within the formal, ecological, botanical, people oriented or 'savannah gestalt' (Charles A. Lewis, 1996) approaches to healing garden design; to assess post occupancy evaluations based on observation, user surveys and interviews; to evaluate user responses specifically to the wild and formal landscapes within the Ernesta Ballard Healing Garden with a view to investigating potential correlations between specific design features and stress reduction.

The health benefits of viewing nature or being in nature in a non hospital setting have been established. Particular landscape characteristics such as vegetation, water, and a feeling of spatial openness have corresponded to increased positive responses in tests conducted on users of urban parks (Ulrich and Addoms, 1981). Similar studies in an academic setting examined the types of landscapes that stressed students seek out, and seventy-five percent identified natural landscapes as their preference (Francis and Cooper Marcus, 1991). Also, children with ADHD concentrate better after spending time in a 'relatively natural' landscape (Kuo, Faber Taylor, Sullivan. 2008).

A new Healing Garden has been added to the Landscape Arboretum of Temple University. It has two distinct landscape types. The first is a 'wild' garden which includes a flowering woodland edge, meadows and rain gardens. The second is a formal labyrinth edged with fragrant thymes and borrowed views to a Pecan and Black Walnut Allee. This paper will examine the results of user responses to both the 'wild' and 'formal' Healing Garden spaces in terms of stress reduction. We know that 'green is good' (Charles A. Lewis, 1996). As landscape architects, we need to identify the type of 'green' that maximizes healing benefits. Is the classical labyrinth more effective than the 'wild' meadow 'prospect' and woods edge 'refuge'? Or, are both landscape elements blended in their contribution to the healing process?

An initial survey of students and staff showed a reduction in stress levels after fifteen minutes in the Healing Garden. This survey assessed healing garden design principles as defined by Clare Cooper Marcus. A subsequent survey incorporates people-environment relationship theories by the Kaplans and Jay Appleton.

The importance of this study may be its potential in guiding the design of a healing garden for an academic campus. This would benefit the general student population in terms of stress reduction and students with special needs.

Bibliography

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