

# Client Perceptions of a Therapeutic Garden at an Inner-City Substance Abuse Recovery Facility: Findings from a Community-Engaged Qualitative Evaluation



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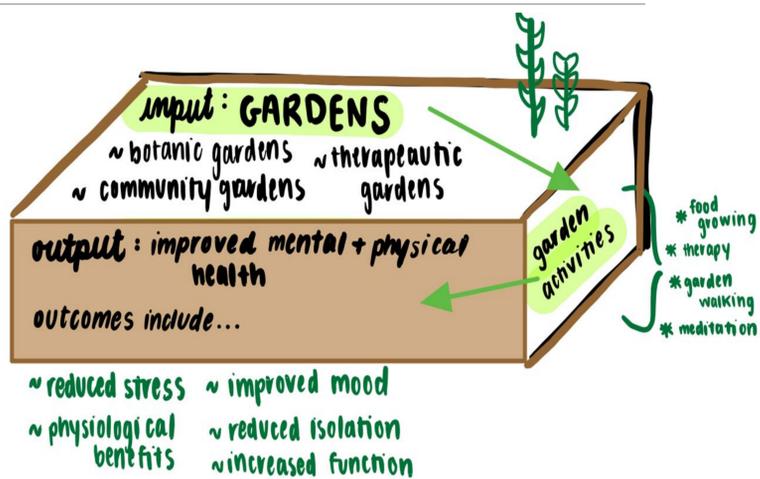
## Introduction

### Background:

Substance abuse is epidemic in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

- Substance abuse recovery needs to address the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of individuals.
- Therapeutic gardening has been shown to reduce vulnerability to addiction.<sup>3</sup>
- Above and Beyond has been using a therapeutic garden to supplement its client recovery programs.
- However, substance abuse and addiction are underrepresented in research about green space.<sup>4</sup>
- We used qualitative methods to gather clients' perspectives of their experiences in a therapeutic garden, information that will be used to guide design of future programming.

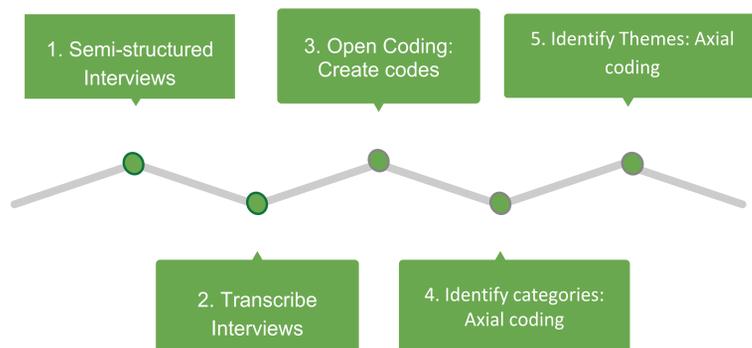
## The Theory of Change in Horticultural Therapy<sup>2</sup>



### Objectives:

- To present client perceptions of a therapeutic garden at an inner-city outpatient addictions recovery center.
- Use this information to guide design of future programming and research.

## Methods



- Sample size = 10 (M:F 8:2)
- Interviewed participants via telephone while in the garden; recorded interviews for later transcription.
- Analysis using DeDoose™: Open coding to develop codes > Axial coding to identify categories > Second round of axial coding to identify themes.

## Results

### Sample quotes:



"Anytime you can escape from a problem for a few minutes ... without having to go back to using drugs or drinking again, is a plus. It's called mindfulness, being mindful of where you're at at that moment." -GROW Participant 5



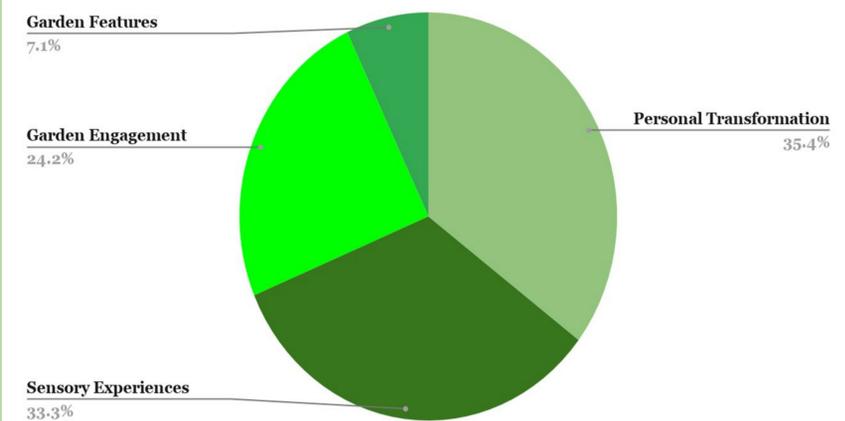
"I'm in nature and I have ... a peace of mind because of what I am doing. I'm out in the garden and I'm contributing to a worthy cause and it's the beautification of the garden." -GROW participant 6



"It's somewhat of a stress reliever ... getting the fresh air and your hands in the dirt ... to plant something and actually see it come to fruition week after week, and be able to eat the fresh vegetables out of the garden." -GROW Participant 1

One hundred forty-seven codes were applied, which were grouped into 14 unique categories, and then elevated into 4 overarching themes.

### Overarching Themes



## Conclusions

- High enthusiasm for engaging with the garden.
- High enthusiasm for participating in the interviews.
- Participants reported
  - Increases mindfulness
  - Reduced stress
  - Increased sensory awareness
  - Personal transformation
- The interview process itself increased mindfulness and sensory awareness.

## Future Directions

- Use the results of this study to develop further programming.
- Evaluate the programming to determine its effectiveness.

## Citations

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