The use of horticultural therapy for older adults with dementia

To achieve psychosocial and physical objectives to improve general well-being through nature/plant activities.

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Horticultural therapy

“ A process that uses plant-related activities through which participants strive to improve their well-being through active and passive involvement” (13)

Horticultural therapy can be used as a **non-pharmacological approach** in the care for people with dementia.

It can be an important part of **person-centered care** and positive person work, which involves engagement of the person with dementia in meaningful activities.

Therefore is it important to know a person's **life history**.

Sense of self can be reached by caring for specific psychological needs of people with dementia: **identity**, **occupation** and **inclusion**.

These feelings of success can be achieved by collaborating with others during horticultural activities, spending a relaxing moment in a suitable environment or experiencing the joy of creating things. (5,10,11)

Horticultural therapy is a multidisciplinary matter.
As a living medium, it requires planning and implementation.

Psychosocial objectives

Increase of :

Functional cognitive skills (1,9)
Reminiscence (1)
Sense of freedom and choice (2)
Well-being, life quality and life satisfaction (4,6,8)
Self-esteem and sense of purpose and responsibility (5,6,7)
Mood, relaxation (8,9)
Social interaction (4,9)

Decrease of:

Agitation and BPSD (1,2,8)
Inactivity (5)
Perception of loneliness (4)
Anxiety, depression and stress (6,8,11)

Horticultural therapy

Use a clear step-by-step plan

Active or passive

Indoor or outdoor

Choose easy, recognizable non toxic plants

Show the results!

If possible, involve each team member in the process

A therapeutic garden may...

...offer sensory input with pleasant stimuli

...decrease feelings of dependence and stress by offering a choice to spend time outdoors (12, 6)

...stimulate social interaction

...prevent disorientation (5)

...support autonomy (6)

A safe environment...

adapted gardening

ergonomic and safe tools

safe and circular footpaths

recognizable environment

Physical objectives

Increased physical activity (1)
Better sleep quality and sleep/wake rhythm (1,9)
Improvement of immune system, cardiac functions, diabetes and obesity, lowering blood pressure, *figure above* (3)
Faster recovery from illness (9)
Fall prevention and higher absorption of vitamin D (2,9)
Reduction of the need for anxiolytic, sedative or antipsychotic medication (5)
Reduction of pain perception (2)

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