



American Horticultural Therapy Association®

Definitions and Positions Paper

Introduction

The American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA) published the first AHTA Definitions and Position Paper in 1997. Since that time, AHTA has continued to work toward defining the profession of horticultural therapy and striving toward professional identity.

In 2013, AHTA adopted the Standards of Practice for Horticultural Therapy. The Standards established the role of the horticultural therapist in delivering services specific to a defined program setting. In support of the Standards, AHTA has updated the Definitions and Positions Paper to reflect the core definitions directly in support of horticultural therapy.

Definition of a Horticultural Therapist

Horticultural therapists have a foundation of knowledge in plant science, human science, and horticultural therapy principles, and professional experience in the application of horticultural therapy practices. The American Horticultural Therapy Association supports the definition that a horticultural therapist is someone who:

- Has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in horticultural therapy, or the minimum of a bachelor's degree with additional coursework in plant science, human science, and horticultural therapy.
- Has completed a 480-hour internship in horticultural therapy supervised by a professionally registered horticultural therapist.
- Is professionally registered as a horticultural therapist with the American Horticultural Therapy Association and is designated by the professional credential HTR, Horticultural Therapist-Registered.

To ensure participant's safety, it is critical for horticultural therapists to have appropriate education, professional training, and continue to develop skills through professional development and continuing education.

Practice Definitions. Two definitions of practice directly support the role of a horticultural therapist:

Horticultural Therapy

Horticultural therapy is the participation in horticultural activities facilitated by a registered horticultural therapist to achieve specific goals within an established treatment, rehabilitation, or vocational plan. Horticultural therapy is an active process which occurs in the context of an established treatment plan where the process itself is considered the therapeutic activity rather than the end product.

Therapeutic Horticulture

Therapeutic horticulture is the participation in horticultural activities facilitated by a registered horticultural therapist or other professionals with training in the use of horticulture as a therapeutic modality to support program goals. Therapeutic horticulture is the process through which participants enhance their well-being through active or passive involvement in plant and plant-related activities.

Program Definitions. Two program definitions directly support the role of a horticultural therapist. Program types are differentiated on the basis of individual goals or program goals.

Horticultural therapy program

Horticultural therapy programs are found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings. Horticultural therapy programs document outcomes for the participant(s) on an individual or group basis. The components of a horticultural therapy program are:

- The engagement of a participant in horticultural-related activities.
- The participant has an identified disability, illness, or life circumstance requiring services.
- The activity is facilitated by a registered horticultural therapist.
- The participation is in the context of an established treatment, rehabilitation, or vocational plan.

Therapeutic horticulture program

Therapeutic horticulture programs are found in a wide variety of healthcare, rehabilitative, and residential settings. The components of therapeutic horticulture program are:

- The engagement of a participant in active or passive horticultural-related activities.
- The participant has an identified disability, illness, or life circumstance requiring services.
- The activity is facilitated by a registered horticultural therapist or other professional with training in horticulture.
- The participation is in the context of the goals and mission of the organization.

Garden Definition. The AHTA developed the first therapeutic garden characteristics in 1995. Specific to the use of horticulture as a therapeutic modality, the therapeutic garden serves both program types.

Therapeutic Garden

A therapeutic garden is designed for use as a component of a treatment, rehabilitation, or vocational program. A garden can be described as being therapeutic in nature when it has been designed to meet the needs of a specific user or population. It is designed to accommodate participant's goals and to facilitate people-plant interactions.

A horticultural therapist uses a therapeutic garden as a tool to engage a participant in horticultural activities. Therapeutic gardens incorporating the AHTA Therapeutic Garden Design Characteristics are gardens designed to provide a horticultural therapy environment.

The American Horticultural Therapy Association

Mission: AHTA is a non-profit membership-driven organization whose mission is to promote and advance the profession of Horticultural Therapy as a therapeutic intervention and rehabilitative modality through:

- The dissemination of information relating to the principles and practices of horticultural therapy as a treatment modality.
- The encouragement of professional growth of horticultural therapy practitioners.
- The establishment of professional standards and a credentialing process for horticultural therapy practitioners.
- The promotion of research related to the impact of horticultural therapy as a treatment modality.
- The advocacy of horticultural therapy as a treatment modality to the public, the healthcare industry, the academic community, and the allied professions.
- The promotion of horticultural therapy educational opportunities.

Values:

- Quality of life is related to the relationship between people and plants.
- Curiosity and attraction to nature are inherent human qualities; individuals respond positively to green plants and colorful flowers.
- Working with plants promotes emotional, mental and physical health and well-being.