



# The Garden Cure

## Natural Sanctuaries Heal Body and Spirit

by Sandra Murphy

### Renew

Since ancient times, gardens have been employed as a place of healing for body and spirit. Japanese healthcare providers prescribe *shinrin-yoku*, meaning, “walking in forests to promote health” or “forest bathing”. Its intent is to use sight, sound and smell to connect with nature through stress-reducing, meditative walks.

Based on a program created by the Morikami Japanese Gardens, in Delray Beach, Florida, Washington state’s Bloedel Reserve, on Bainbridge Island, conducts Strolls for Well-Being. Participants sign up for a free, 10-week session of 12 self-guided walks and three group meetings. A companion workbook is provided to encourage journaling on themes such as forgiveness, gratitude and joy.

“Public gardens are a safe place where people can focus and do the work,” says Erin Jennings, with Bloedel. “We see people that wish to reflect and refuel or simply be more aware and intentional in life.” With 150 acres of natural woodlands and landscaped areas, ranging from a moss garden to a bird marsh, participants can take as much time as they need.

### Refresh

Bees are an integral part of any flowering garden, and Spikenard Farm Honeybee Sanctuary, in Floyd, Virginia, sustainably hosts 30 hives on six acres adjacent to a field planted with buckwheat, mustard, sunflowers and clover for its biodynamic beekeeping. An orchard on the property dovetails with an organic farm next door. Tours, talks, plant sales, food and music enhance the hospitality.

Hope Hill Lavender Farm, in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, adds lavender to soap, sugar scrubs, lotion and essential oil. “It takes 11 pounds of hand-picked fresh blossoms to make one ounce of essential oil,” says Troy Jochems, co-owner with his wife, Wendy. A member of the mint family, lavender adds distinctive flavor and fragrance to both sweet and savory dishes (find recipes at [HopeHillLavenderFarm.com](http://HopeHillLavenderFarm.com)). Visit

the farm on summer weekends through mid-August and plan to partake of the annual lavender festival next June.

In Glen Allen, Virginia, visitors enjoy a cool serving of lavender lemonade or honey ice cream at Lavender Fields Herb Farm after a stroll through the garden. Greenhouse tours and fall classes on growing herbs, vegetables and lavender include how to make an herbal wreath.

## Restore

Tea Wellness classes and tastings of fair trade heirloom varieties are a big draw at Light of Day Organics, in Traverse City, Michigan. They're taught by founder and horticulturist Angela Macke, a registered nurse. It's the only dual-certified organic and Demeter Biodynamic commercial grower of tea plants in North America.

The Boiron Medicinal Garden at the Rodale Institute, in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, emphasizes the importance of plants in homeopathy. Maggie Saska, plant production specialist with the research farm, explains, "Walking tours with educational signage in the garden let visitors know which species to look for when planting their own organic healing garden. Plants from a store may not be organically grown or of the correct species," although a nursery may afford more options.

Christophe Merville, D.Pharm., Boiron USA director of education and pharmacy development, attests that many familiar plants can offer benefits beyond beauty, such as reducing stress, promoting healing or easing congestion. He cautions, "People think plants are naturally safe, but they can be dangerous. St. John's wort extract, for example, can relieve mild depression, but interacts with prescription medicines. It also reacts to light, so users may experience rashes from sun exposure.

"Lemon balm can be made into an antioxidant tea. It can be grown in a garden, on a balcony or indoors, and combines well with chamomile or lavender. We like it for helping to relieve anxiety or to improve mental performance."

Merville suggests steeping German

## AMERICANS' INSIDE STORY

- Only 12 percent of U.S. adults go outside nearly every day, 8 percent several times a week and 6 percent only once or twice a week. Two percent never venture outside.
- When U.S. adults take time out of doors, just under a third spend more than an hour there and almost a quarter spend at least 30 minutes while the rest average five to 10 minutes or less.
- Thirty-eight percent of Americans 55 years and over invest at least an hour outside each day, compared to 25 percent of those under 35.

Source: *National Recreation and Park Association*



chamomile tea for relaxing sleep. He says breathing in the steam helps a stuffy nose. When used as a compress, it can relieve pain and itch from rashes. "Don't drink too much or make it too concentrated," he warns, because of its blood-thinning properties. Saska and Merville recommend that enthusiasts take classes, work with an herbalist and find a good reference book. Merville prefers *Rodale's 21st Century Herbal* for beginners.

Vicki Nowicki, founder of Liberty Gardens, in Downers Grove, Illinois, observes, "The world is seeing the first generations that don't have a relationship with the land or know how to grow their own food." Its seed-lending library, classes and tours, along with other healing gardens throughout the country, aim to get everyone back to basics including going outside.

Connect with freelance writer Sandra Murphy at [StLouisFreelanceWriter@mindspring.com](mailto:StLouisFreelanceWriter@mindspring.com)