



Nature-wise Architecture for Care and Health

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INTRODUCTION

Nature was intrinsic to early settings for dwelling, ageing and human health as evidenced by physic, monastery and medicinal gardens at the heart of these communities. As well as nature for medicine, a natural, plant-rich environment facilitated healthy engagement throughout the lifecycle. With the advent of modern architectures of care, simultaneous with pharmaceutical symptoms management, the importance of nature for health became a matter of aesthetics and marketing rather than a practical necessity. The 21st century invites nature back into the picture to support the healthy ageing agenda - particularly for maintaining cognitive health, as dementia is of global concern.



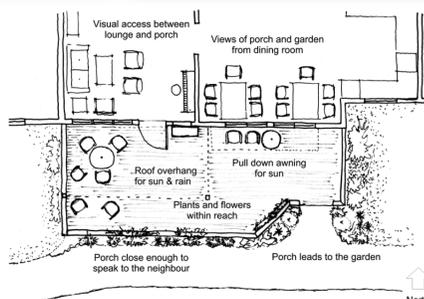
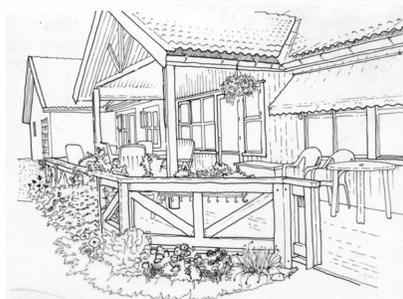
Edge Spaces

Scan to read 'Building Edge' in *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly*

Architectural features must enable easy physical and visual access to the outdoors, as well as invite natural elements such as daylight and views to flow inward: complex windows, porches, windowed corridors, covered walkways, conservatories and garden rooms.

THERAPEUTIC GREEN SPACES

The outdoor environment plays an important role in mental and physical well-being by providing a wide range of benefits, such as exercise, fresh air, emotional well-being, the opportunity for informal encounters with neighbours and friends, the appreciation of the countryside^[1] and decreased levels of agitation.^[2] Further, neighbourhood green space has been shown to reduce risk of incident diabetes^[3] and slow the expected decline in older people's physical activity.^[4] In the UK, the King's Fund programme, Enhancing the Healing Environment, worked with almost 30 hospitals and 35 hospices to support the design of healing environments, many with a focus on gardens.^[5] Gardens are also important to support recovery from illness. Horatio's Garden provides beautiful therapeutic gardens for spinal injury patients.^[5]



COGNITIVE HEALTH

While most elders maintain good cognitive function into old age, a stimulating environment can be designed to keep them physically, mentally and socially active,^[6, 7] reduce depression,^[8] and ameliorate problems of frailty and impairment.^[9] Gardens and nature spaces are important for reducing loneliness and isolation, which can lead to cognitive decline, depression and dementia.^[1, 10, 11]

SUMMARY

If architecture connects people and nature environments in meaningful ways, this helps mentally and emotionally by providing opportunities that lift the spirit, enhance the mood and stimulate the senses to increase overall wellbeing and quality of life^[12-14]. Implementing health research into landscape design, architecture and care practice will support proactive therapeutic opportunities involving nature and the natural world.



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