

and furthermore, from the desk of the dean



Dean Jerry G. Schickedanz

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Go work in the garden and call me in the morning

As comprehensive as our magazine coverage is in this issue, I noticed one aspect of gardening that we have not addressed adequately. That is, gardening as therapy. After all, we haven't addressed why gardening is very likely the favorite pastime in our country with some 34 million gardening households. The best phrase I have seen that explains what gardening offers is "emotional restoration." To quote the psalm, "It restoreth my soul."

Many a gardener has sought to recover her or his soul after it had been misplaced in a world of pressure, strife and confusion. My own garden is where I look for my soul after a week that may be replete with the less than uplifting aspects of the educational world. Some people find the same solace on a trout stream (I've found my soul there, too) or petting their dog, but gardeners have their own journal devoted to the subject.

I've never seen a journal of therapeutic fishing, but we do have a *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, and it can make for some fascinating reading. One article recounts how a study of 53 nursing home patients showed a correlation between gardening and a reduction in blood pressure. Another article states, "A garden, if designed properly, is capable of reducing stress." Still another talks about overcoming burnout through gardening. The garden, the literature states, is an aphrodisiac that offers a bond with nature.

The journal not only assesses the garden as a respite for burned-out office workers, but also considers how gardens help the aging, mentally ill, prisoners, addicts, disabled and infirm. Gardening for mobility

among arthritis sufferers has been a topic on our *Southwest Yard and Garden* program, and "healing gardens" are a major topic in the literature addressing physical, emotional and psychological trauma.

We have recounted how community gardens heal from the soul outward, creating social unity in our urban centers and devoting a portion of the bounty to those in need.

We also use gardens to teach youngsters. Our faculty has worked with the Smithsonian Institution to establish curricula that introduces science, history and more to elementary students through their hands-on work in the garden.

Subject matter is much more approachable if students can touch, smell and interact with the first lesson. We have worked with pueblo children to make stronger links with their cultural history through garden activities as well, allowing them to get familiar with their ancestors' crops and implements.

Our landscape designers in the college know, too, the power of the garden to calm and create other positive responses in people. In a world increasingly wrecked by havoc, gardens offer an almost limitless potential to respond by offering solace, beauty, learning experiences, positive social contact and so much more.

The garden takes us back to humanity's first civilizing influence. By cooperating with nature to garden, humans created the possibility of settling and building civilizations. After millennia of change and strife, whether a person feels like a refugee from the office or from a terrorized society, gardening is still one of the best ways to say, "This is my place in the world."