

## Back to Nature

To nurture something is to ‘take care of, feed and protect something, especially young children or plants and help it to develop’. As gardeners we obviously nurture our gardens, whether they are on the patio, or spread out over acres -but an interesting perspective is the question, ‘does your garden nurture you’?

There is something special, perhaps magical, that happens when you spend time in nature. Over the years there has been a steady increase in the development of Horticultural Therapy, Therapeutic Horticulture, Therapeutic Gardening, Healing Gardens, Forest Bathing and even Green Exercise. I remember in college in the 80’s people talking about horticulture therapy and in the last few years talking about forest bathing. It’s all about being in nature. The people/plant/nature interactions can assist in pain relief, create distractions, remove negative thoughts, reduce worries, stress and anxieties. Above all, they can help to improve a person’s quality of life. There is growing evidence that spending time in the garden, or in nature can decrease stress. Even the view of a garden or trees from a window, can help patients heal faster after surgery. This may sound a little “hippie dippy” but it works. For me, when I take a walk outside, I can solve the world’s problems. I know that when I’m in the orchard I feel great. My favorite saying is “there is never a bad day in the orchard.”

There is a reason houseplants have been so popular in 2020. It’s that touch of nature in our homes that soothe us and makes us happy. Gardening in general has been very popular in 2020. One, it gives us something to do. Secondly, being in nature is therapeutic. And thirdly, it is joyous to eat food that we have grown even if it’s just one tomato.

Working in the garden is also physical. Mowing, digging, and pruning is great physical exercise. Why go to the gym when you can get in shape in your garden?

So, start your morning with a cup of coffee outside, take a walk and prune your shrubs. It’s good for you!