

# Biodiverse Therapeutic Gardens for the Healthcare Sector

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, the scientific literature has provided overwhelming evidence that green environments have positive effects on people's health and well-being. Observing or having contact with green reduces stress, increases attention, increases the pain threshold and appears to accelerate healing. Health institutions in Europe make little or no explicit use of this knowledge to improve the quality of healthcare. However, a well-thought-out green environment around care centres offers opportunities to improve care and encourages the interaction between people in need of care and the society. The restorative capacity of a green environment appears to be related to its biodiversity. In our intensively used Europe, however, biodiversity is under strong pressure. Gardens can play a role in boosting biodiversity on a landscape scale and in creating stepping stones for species migrating northward as a result of climate change. Nature-based solutions such as biodiverse therapy gardens can create win-wins for both the healthcare sector and nature. However, knowledge and a multidisciplinary approach are required to obtain concrete recommendations for practice. With a team of researchers from University College Ghent, namely the Faculty Education, Health and Social work, the Faculty Science and Technology and the Faculty School of Arts, we (i) will screen what kind of gardens are currently present around care centres and whether they are used for therapeutic goals, (ii) will research how biodiverse gardens can be used in different kinds of therapy and (iii) will design green concepts for biodiverse therapeutic gardens.

### **Aim of the paper and urban challenge it addresses:**

Presentation of a new research project of University College Ghent, which can contribute to the proposal idea for the H2020 call 'Visionary and integrated solutions to improve well-being and health in cities' Public spaces need to be designed and managed sustainably and equitably to ensure that (i) they have a positive impact on the health and quality of life of citizens, (ii) enhances resilience to climate change and 3) reduces the environmental footprint of cities.

## Workshop

Workshop II: Health and Wellbeing in Urban Environments

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