



基督教家庭服務中心
Christian Family Service Centre

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Media Coverage

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Re: The serene urban garden where confidence grows
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CITY

HEALTH

THE SERENE URBAN GARDEN WHERE CONFIDENCE GROWS

Horticulture therapy at a 7,000 sq ft project in Choi Hung is being opened to the public after successfully improving the lives of people with mental and emotional issues

Lo Wei
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A "Serene Oasis" of scented herbs and colourful flowers is being opened to the public after proving successful in helping people deal with mental and emotional problems.

Operators of the 7,000 sq ft garden next to housing estates in urban Choi Hung say caring for the plants and meeting others with similar problems has proved healing for people with dementia and depression during a two-year trial.

Now the Christian Family Service Centre is expanding its "horticulture therapy" programme to accept applications from the public.

"It seems like a simple activity, but being close to nature, the participants are face to face with life," said **Kitty Chau Shuk-king, a programme director with the centre.**

"They are being taken care of all the time, but through gardening, they become the carers."

The centre has been providing six- to eight-week programmes for groups of eight participants, led by a horticulture therapy assistant.

Their conditions were assessed before and after they completed the programme.

Of more than 800 people who have taken part, nine out of 10 said it had helped them to be more focused and deal with their emotional problems, the centre said.

"When they put in effort, seeing the plants' growth gives them satisfaction," Chau said.

"It gives them confidence and has a positive impact on their emotions."

The garden, named "Serene Oasis", has more than 60 plant species and is designed to create a peaceful feeling.

It is surrounded by trees with sounds from a small waterfall and chirping birds. Scents of herbs like rosemary and lemon-grass linger in different parts of the garden. Some of the flower beds are elevated for wheelchair users.

Liz Law Tik, a horticulture therapy assistant who has led some of the courses, said the change was obvious in some participants.

She particularly remembered one man who seemed angry at the world and had not said a word during his two years in a home for the elderly.

He asked to take part after learning about the programme, and continued even when he was the only male.

Staff at the home said he started greeting and chatting with people after the therapy.

The centre has also trained 280 horticulture therapy assistants from different social welfare organisations in the past two years.

Horticulture therapy originated in the United States and can now be studied at universities there.

There were difficulties introducing it to Hong Kong, such as finding a quiet green space.

Chau said the centre sought advice from horticulture therapy experts from Taiwan in setting up the garden.

It also considered local elements like growing ginger and spring onions, which are closer to the experience of local elderly people.

The garden will be opened for public visits twice a month.



Li Ping-kei (left) takes care of plants at "Serene Oasis", the Christian Family Service Centre's garden. Photo: Felix Wong

They are taken care of all the time, but through gardening, they become carers

KITTY CHAU, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR



香港公益金會員機構
Member Agency of The Community Chest

Prepared by CAD-CU 20130515



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