

Sense the Connection

Sensory Gardens as a Tool to Build a Connection to Nature

The Issue

Society is becoming disconnected with nature. Connections with nature foster a sense of appreciation and stewardship of nature and benefit an individual's mental and physical well being^{6,9}.

GOAL- strengthen visitor connections to nature by breaking down preconceived barriers that separate humans from nature through conservation psychology principles.

Approach

SENSE OF PLACE- through native plants and engagement of all five senses

AFFORDANCES- enhance the experience and reinforce a positive connection.

ECO IDENTITY - by reflection and personal exploration.

Evaluation

Quantitative information regarding visitors and the impact of the exhibit will be gathered at the *Wall of Information* and the *Wall of Connections*.

Qualitative information will be gathered through staff observation and open ended questions/activities throughout the exhibit at each *Sense Station*.

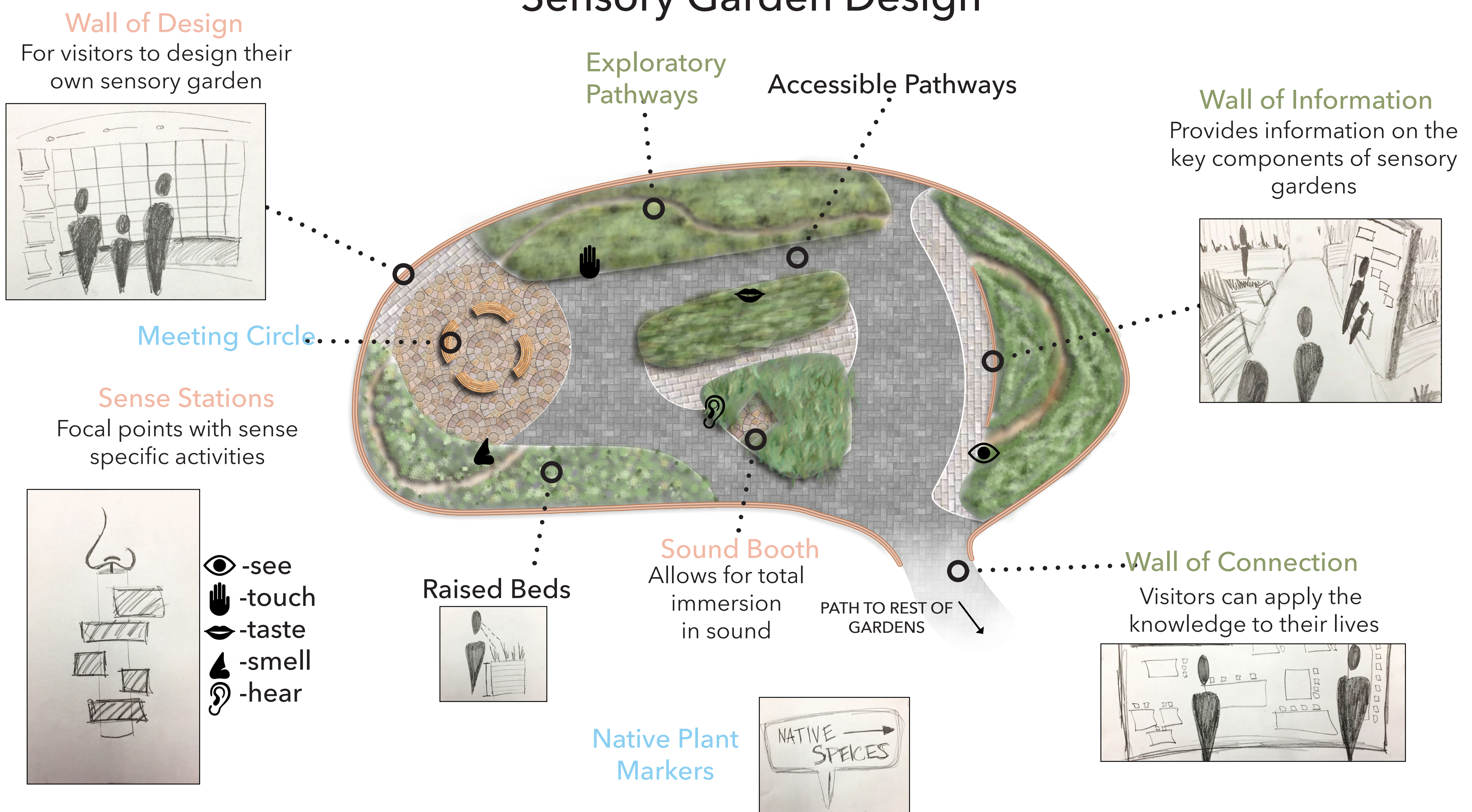
What is a Sensory Garden?

A garden space constructed for stimulation of all five senses through both hard and softscape features⁸.

Design Concept

Garden feature locations were inspired by where each sense was processed in the human brain

Sensory Garden Design

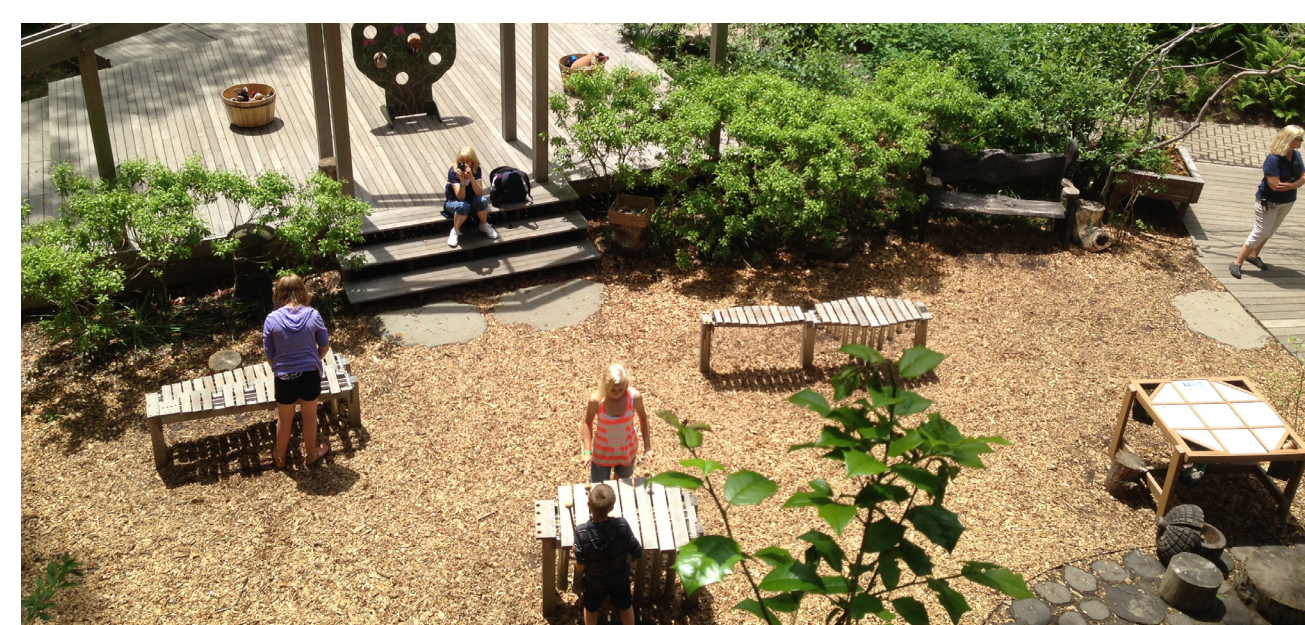


Sense of Place



Sense of place is a personal/emotion connection to a specific location¹. Exposure of all five senses roots the space in memory more clearly. Using *Native Plant Markers* builds a bond between visitors and the nature as it exists in their proverbial backyard⁷. It breaks down the notion that nature exists in another place and makes the area surrounding them worth caring about.

Affordances



In a typical garden setting, affordances tend to be limited to sight. In a sensory garden affordances reach the realms of all five senses. Affordances provided by the plants are instrumental in cultivating meaningful interactions between visitors and their environment⁵. Many other garden features have other objects for manipulation including tiles and chalk boards.

Eco Identity



An identity, be it individual or social, is a way to describe oneself³. The *Wall of Information* asks visitors to reflect on their own identity and how they see their role in nature. The *Exploratory Pathways* allow for personal exploration- to directly place themselves in nature, while triggering different senses to make connections between nature and their own lives².

References:

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 - 3) Harré, N. Psychology for a Better World: Strategies to Inspire Sustainability. University of Auckland Press, 2011. Accessed online psych.auckland.ac.nz/psychologyforabetterworld.
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 - 5) Heft, (1988). Affordances of children's environments: a functional approach to environmental description. Children's Environments Quarterly, 5 (3), 29-37.
 - 6) Housley, E., & Wolf, K. (2013). Feeling Stressed? Take a Time Out in Nature. TKF Foundation.
 - 7) Hussein, H. (2010). Sensory gardens: Assessing their design and use. Intelligent Buildings International, 2(2), 116-123.
 - 8) O'Connell, J. and Spurgeon, T., 1996, 'Gardens for all', Landscape Design: Journal of Landscape Institute 249, 29-31.
 - 9) Sandifer, P. A., Sutton-Grier, A. E., & Ward, B. P. (2015). Exploring connections among nature, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and human health and well-being: Opportunities to enhance health and biodiversity conservation. Ecosystem Services, 12, 1-15.
- Images: Brain- <http://www.livescience.com/29365-human-brain.html>

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