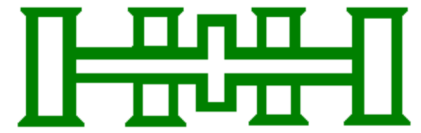


Your Guide to Our Senses Garden



Holy Cross Hospital

The Purpose of The Garden

Many of the patients at Holy Cross have intellectual impairment so severe that communication with others and interaction with the world in general is difficult and fragmented. For a significant proportion of them, it is hard for us to evaluate what they are experiencing, so limited are their responses and their communication.

This means that we need to employ some ingenuity in making the most of any basic sense experience that may be available to them and could provide a communication gateway. We need to use the simplest sensations to help them to connect with their surroundings and with other people.



Seaside Corner

Touch wall – you may need to guide someone's hand to help them make the most of the textures. Encourage firm pressure and light pressure, rubbing with the knuckles and with the palm of the hand.

With more able patients, after first exploring the panels, you could play a game by getting them to shut their eyes (or using a scarf as a blindfold if you have one handy) then taking them to one of the panels, letting them explore it by hand and then moving away from it and asking them to identify which one they had been feeling. Use colourful frames as a discussion point (which one do you like best?)

Timber board deck – again a different textured surface – draw attention to the new sound underfoot.

Plants around the deck – these grasses ripple in the breeze, moving in a way that other plants don't. In absence of breeze, may be necessary to blow on them to produce movement!

Twirling sculpture- set this moving

Sound post with button to activate seagull sound – close your eyes and imagine yourself to be at the seaside (does this spark any memories?)

See if the patient wishes to activate the noise themselves. With some this will require repeated demonstration of how it works, but acquiring the skill may be an achievement. The immediacy of the effect of pushing the button will be a motivator.



Pool Area

Shallow pool – pebbles can be thrown into the pool.

Point out the ripples and different effects of small and larger stones. Comment on special bog plants living in the water.

Timber bridge – draw attention to the slope up and down and the noise made by a wheel-chair or stamping of feet (resonates in air-space under bridge). Feel the wooden structure of the bridge (compare the touch/temperature to glass and steel of metal bridge).

Metal bridge - draw attention to different sound of wheelchair on the metal surface – you may want to wheel back and forth, jump and scuff feet to create new sounds. Feel of different components of the bridge may be interesting (glass, metal, wood). Reflection of wheelchair visible in the glass sided bridge.

Water wall – encourage swiping movements of the patient's hand in the water to create patterns. Discuss the water temperature, distorted reflections in stainless steel sheet and patterns made by the water. Flick water on to face and arms.

Xylophone – if necessary guide the patient's hand with a beater. If possible take turns in beating chimes or give instructions to beat a particular coloured chime, a high or low note or a certain number of chimes. The guide could beat out a sequence and then give instructions to copy the sequence (start with just one note and then build up length of sequence). Plenty of opportunity for playing tunes and guessing what they are or guessing whether a high or low note is being played (eyes closed).



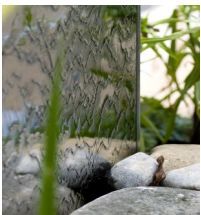
Terrace Area

Scented border – gently rub the leaves of the scented plants (lavender, sage etc) so that the smell is on your fingers – offer the scented fingers for smelling. Please don't actually pick the leaves.

Container plants – these plants have leaves with very different textures. See if you can encourage gentle stroking of the leaves. The encouragement of a gentle touch is in itself a useful endeavour as it involves conscious motor control of the hand.

Seating area – good place to sit and observe other people but also the plants surrounding the area. Look up also at the trees that can be seen above the roof-tops, are they moving? Nesting boxes on opposite wall can also provide a discussion point. For someone visually impaired, the slatted surface of the table may provide an interesting surface to explore.

Glitter ball - this can be moved by someone on the terrace, but the effect is probably best viewed from the spongy area, as it casts points of light over the terrace area. These points of light obviously move faster if the globe is spinning faster – draw attention to this effect.



and Finally...

The stimulation provided by the garden may have a lasting therapeutic effect on the intellect for people in the earlier stages of their recovery, by encouraging subtle improvement in alertness or concentration (though unfortunately this would be hard to demonstrate or prove scientifically). What we are principally hoping for is to provide a situation where novelty gives variety to the day and there are opportunities for dialogue with relatives, friends and staff. For example, simple turn-taking in banging the xylophone is a type of conversation for someone who cannot speak. These varied opportunities will enhance quality of life through allowing connections that would otherwise not be made. This enhanced richness of experience will have benefits for mood and contentment