



**VERDURABLE**

14 rue Cérés, 93600 Aulnay-sous-Bois  
Site : [www.verdurable.fr](http://www.verdurable.fr)

## **Making Therapeutic Garden Workshops a Success**

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- i. Horticultural Therapy & Therapeutic Garden
- ii. Steps of Preparation
- iii. Team Building
- iv. Workshop Follow-up

Version 2025



## I. Horticultural Therapy & Therapeutic Garden

**Horticultural therapy** is a practical and holistic approach to rehabilitation that supports individuals through adapted gardening activities in a safe and nurturing environment.

Also known as horticultural therapy in English, this practice uses gardening and plant-based activities as a therapeutic medium. Widely implemented in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Northern Europe, it has been expanding in France in recent years. Falling under the category of non-drug-based care, it is designed for older adults, people living with Alzheimer's disease and related conditions, individuals with disabilities, and adolescents experiencing difficulties.

This approach relies on the sensory stimulation of all five senses through contact with living, plant, and mineral elements. Tailored activities are integrated into a broader care program, with the aim of enhancing well-being and autonomy, in close collaboration with medical and caregiving teams.

**The therapeutic garden** is a space with a healing purpose, created within social, medico-social (ESMS), hospital, or para-hospital settings.

It is a place attuned to natural rhythms, where individuals can care for both body and mind, whether as part of a medical protocol supporting horticultural therapy activities or simply for personal well-being.

The benefits:

- Sensory stimulation: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell
- Cognitive benefits: Supports memory retention or maintenance, especially for individuals with Alzheimer's disease
- Social benefits
  - Connecting with other people
  - Sharing results
  - Friendly competition
- Physical benefits
  - Staying active
  - Physical activities outdoors
  - Walks, beneficial exercises
- Emotional and psychological benefits
  - Improved self-esteem and confidence
  - Enthusiasm for the future
  - Creative spirits
  - Patience and tolerance for frustrations
  - Intense concentration



## II. Étapes préparatoires

### A. Définir la localisation de l'atelier

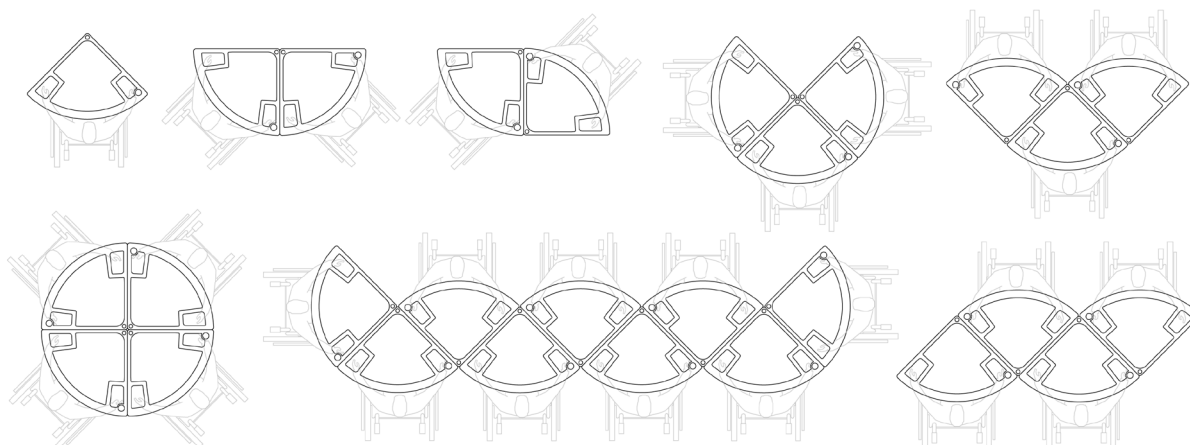
	Mostly Outdoors	Mostly Indoors	Mixed (recommended)
<b>Spaces</b>	Terrace, patio	Activity room, animation space	A door provides access from the activity room to a terrace or patio.
<b>Advantages</b>	Good connection with nature	Indoor facilities are complete	Workshops can be flexibly organized according to weather and time.
<b>Disadvantages</b>	Be careful in bad weather or strong sun.	Limited plant choice: Vegetable garden impossible ( <del>vegetables</del> , <del>aromatic plants</del> ). Only indoor plants	None
<b>Needs and Precautions</b>	Protection from rain, sun, and cold	Placed near windows to receive good lighting, with direct or indirect sunlight depending on the plant species. Keep away from radiators or heating sources. Water moderately. Ensure proper ventilation.	Avoid moving the planters over long distances, as vibrations can damage the roots.

#### Two Important Factors: **Light and Water**

- Light is essential for the survival of most of our plants; a prolonged lack of light can be fatal.
- It is recommended that the future therapeutic garden be located near a water source to facilitate daily watering.

### B. Garden Size and Shape

The planters can be grouped or separated according to the dedicated spaces and the number of participants on the day of the workshop. One planter can even be shared by up to three people: one person seated in a wheelchair in front, and two people standing on either side.



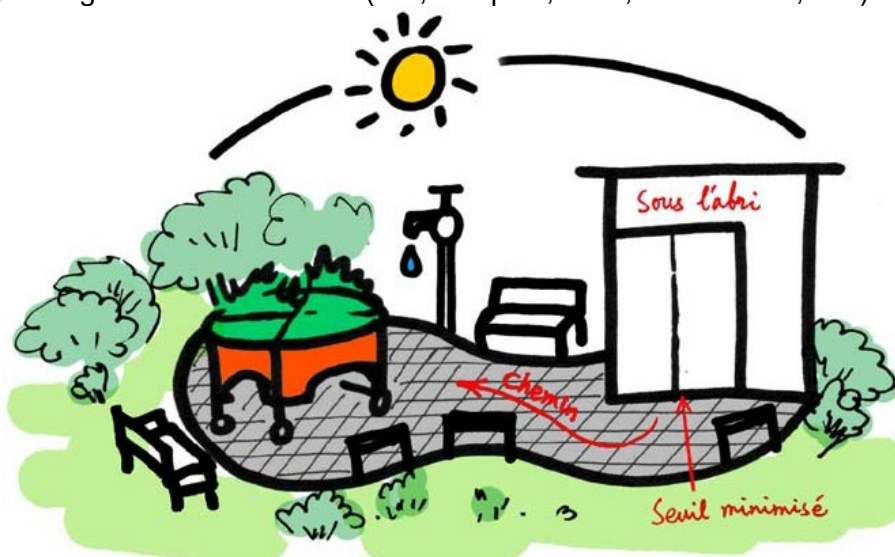


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It is also necessary to provide:

- Circulation areas wide enough to accommodate groups of people
- Wheelchair-accessible pathways
- Handrails where needed
- Ergonomic and adapted gardening tools
- A nearby storage room for materials (soil, compost, tools, accessories, etc.)



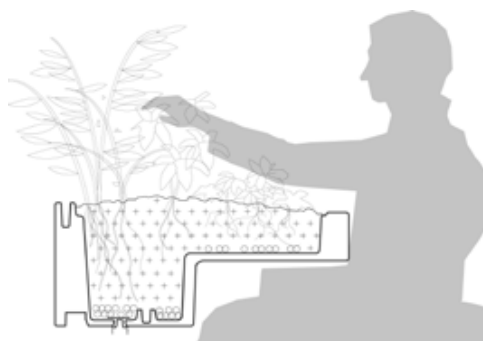
## C. Accessibility of the Space

- With supervision (open only during the workshop)
- Without supervision (open to the public)

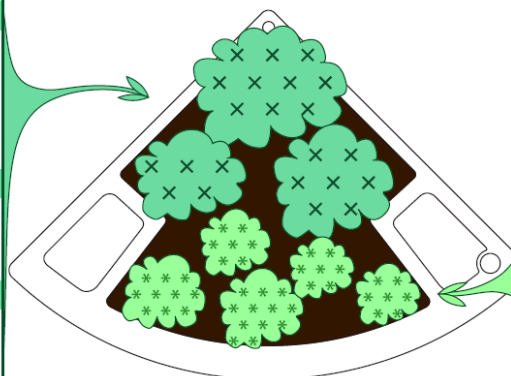
## D. Garden Themes

Plant Placement with Varying Heights:

Place low plants in the foreground and taller plants in the background to provide a clear overall view. Users can reach the plants at the back without being obstructed by those in front.



High plants
Kitchen garden
dwarf bean, physalis, lettuce, peas, chilli, pepper, cherry tomato, dwarf carrot, etc.
Aromatics
mint, rosemary, basil, sage, ginger, etc.
Flowers
pelargonium, begonia, fuchsia, snapdragon, etc.



Low growing plants
Kitchen garden
lamb's lettuce, arugula, strawberry, land cress, radish 18 days, sorrel, etc.
Aromatics
thyme, parsley, tarragon, savory, chives, etc.
Flowers
petunia, pansy, tagetes, primrose, clove pink, etc.



Kitchen garden (Vegetable garden)	
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Harvesting fruits provides self-esteem and the joy of success.</li><li>• Daily plant maintenance gives participants a sense of responsibility.</li></ul>
<b>Precautions Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pay attention to participants with mental health conditions, as the leaves of some plants can be toxic, for example, tomato leaves.</li><li>• Perseverance is required for a bountiful harvest.</li><li>• Fertilize the soil regularly, according to the specific needs of each plant.</li></ul>
<b>Plants</b>	Mesclun, corn salad, lettuce, dwarf beans, half-long carrots, peas, radishes (18-day radishes, e.g.), cherry tomatoes, strawberries, bell peppers, watercress, arugula, etc.

Aromatic Garden	
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work and stimulate the five senses and memory.</li><li>• Prepare herbal tea / tea with the leaves. (See the list of possible herbal teas below)</li></ul>
<b>Precautions Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some plants attract insects; they need to be treated regularly.</li><li>• Fertilize the soil regularly according to each plant's needs.</li></ul>
<b>Plants</b>	Mint, thyme, rosemary, parsley, basil, tarragon, sage, savory, lemon verbena, chives, lavender, ginger, etc.

#### List of Possible Infusions

- Peppermint infusion – for nausea
- Thyme or elderberry infusion – for colds
- Rosemary infusion – relieves headaches and aids digestion
- Sage infusion – for sore throats
- Ginger infusion – may stimulate the immune system
- St. John's Wort infusion – recommended for mild depression

Flower Garden	
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bright, cheerful colors create a pleasant ambiance.</li><li>• Flowers may help patients recall certain memories.</li><li>• Repotting workshops can be organized regularly.</li></ul>
<b>Precautions Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A slightly higher budget may be needed to change flowers according to the seasons.</li><li>• Fertilize the soil regularly according to each plant's needs.</li></ul>
<b>Plants</b>	Geranium, begonia, sweet pea, pansy, primrose, bellflower, carnation, fuchsia, snapdragon, marigold, chrysanthemum, petunia, daisy, cyclamen, etc.

Water Garden	
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An atypical garden with goldfish and a fountain adds life to the ambiance.</li><li>• Zen-inspired atmosphere.</li><li>• Feeding the fish becomes a daily leisure activity.</li></ul>
<b>Precautions Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The container should be cleaned regularly, removing any waste.</li><li>• Perform a partial water change (one-third of the tank) every month.</li></ul>
<b>Plants</b>	Water lilies, lotus, horsetail, myriophyllum, nymphoides, etc.

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Site : [www.verdurable.fr](http://www.verdurable.fr)**Summary Table**

	<b>Kitchen garden</b>	<b>Aromatic Garden</b>	<b>Flower Garden</b>	<b>Water Garden</b>
<b>Avantages</b>	Self-esteem, Sense of responsibility	Stimulate the five senses and memory, Herbal teas / tea	Pleasant ambiance, Memory recall, Repotting workshops	Unique garden, Goldfish, Lively atmosphere
<b>Precautions Disadvantages</b>	Leaves of some plants are toxic, Greater perseverance	Attracts insects, Regular treatment	Slightly higher budget	Regular cleaning

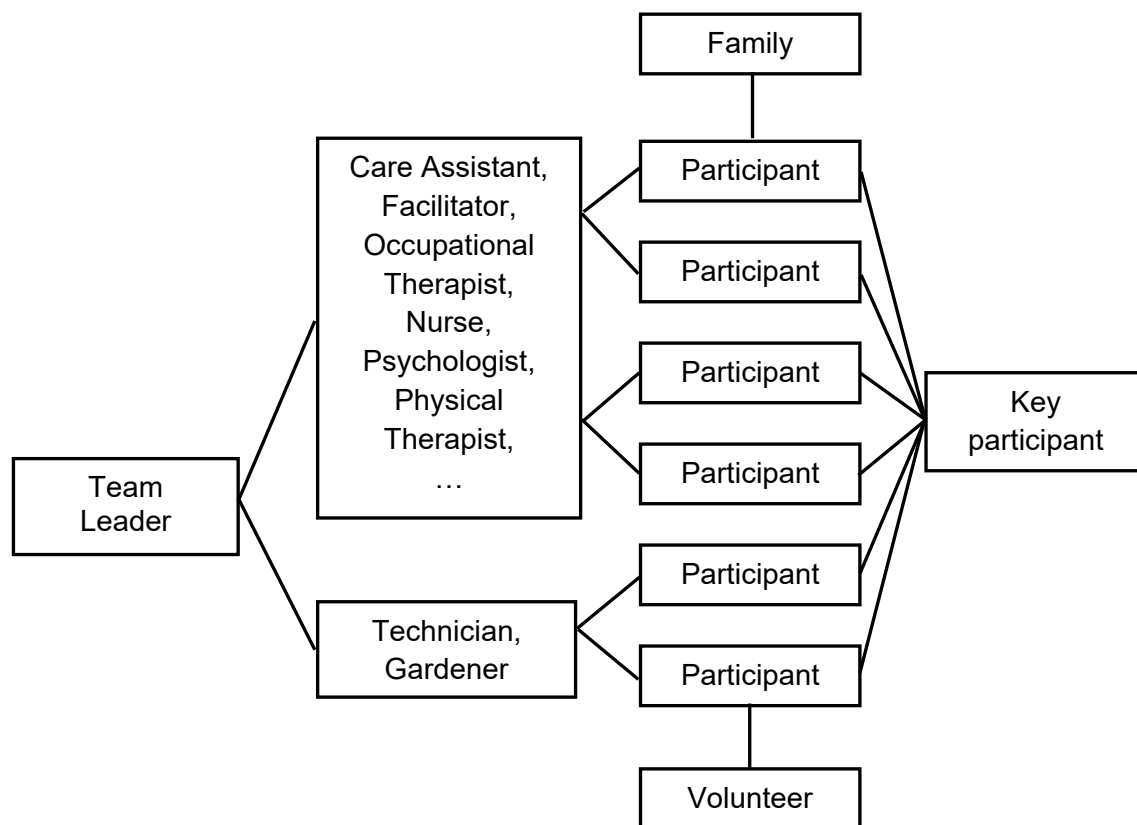
**E. Possibilities according to the seasons**

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Autumn</b>	<b>Winter</b>
<b>Planting</b>	Sowing / nursery	✓	✓		
	Transplanting	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Maintenance</b>	Pruning leaves		✓	✓	
	Aerating the soil		✓	✓	
	Weeding		✓	✓	
	Watering	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Picking flowers		✓	✓	
<b>Tasting</b>	Picking fruits & vegetables		✓	✓	
	Infusion		✓	✓	
	Tasting, cooking	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Artistic</b>	Collage / painting	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ikebana (flower arrangement)	✓	✓	✓	✓



## III. Team Building

- Appoint a **team leader** to prepare the budget, program, and schedule.
- Identify one or more **participant referents** to assist the facilitator and encourage others.
- Ensure **sustainability** of activities by motivating participants, fostering attention to growth, watering, and care; encourage participation gradually, starting with a 15-minute session, then 20, 30 minutes, etc.
- Develop a **social plan** involving external volunteers, family members, associations, municipal services, etc.
- **Intergenerational workshops** consistently bring joy and success.
- Organize **multidisciplinary workshops** (music, culinary arts, etc.) around the therapeutic garden.



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## IV. Workshop Follow-up

- **Success objective:** Begin with 10 minutes of enjoyment, progressing toward long-term engagement.
- **Evaluation sheet or workshop report:** Record observations and assess participants' cognitive and social levels. (See example evaluation sheet)

**Tableau d'évaluation**

<b>Workshop Date</b>							
<b>Workshop Objective</b>							
<b>Presence of caregivers, healthcare staff, facilitators, and occupational therapists</b>							
<b>Participant Name</b>	<b>Participation intention</b>			<b>Activity attitude</b>			
	<b>Voluntary</b>	<b>Needs prompt</b>	<b>Refuses</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Passive but present</b>	<b>Needs prompt</b>	<b>Totally passive</b>
<b>Observations</b>							

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