



Community gardens as healing tools for patients with eating disorders

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What is a “healing garden”?

A “healing garden” is a garden or landscape designed for a specific population, place, and intended positive health outcome.

A “rehabilitation garden,” “therapeutic garden,” or “enabling garden” is a garden where physical, occupational, horticultural, and other therapies take place.

(Sachs, 2016)



Wait!
I said «healing tool» not
«healing garden»

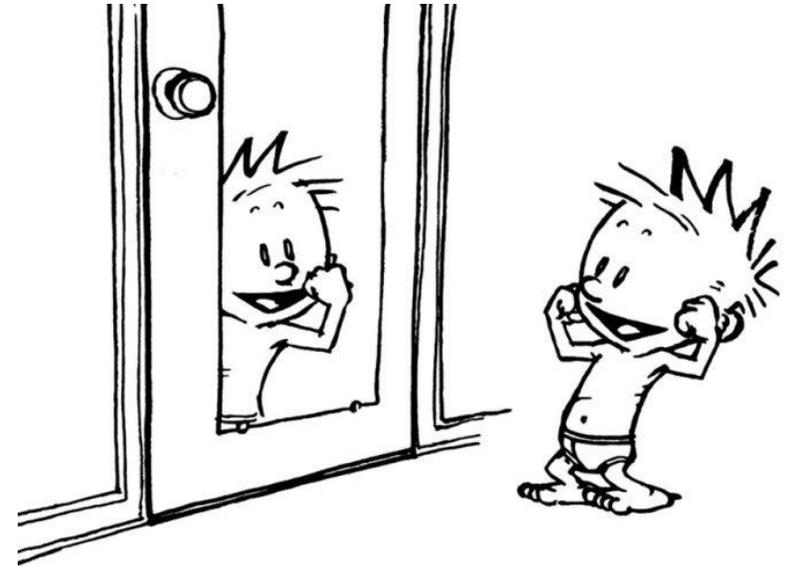


Health

«To heal» is defined by Webster's dictionary in three ways:

- to make sound or whole;
- to cause (an undesirable condition) to be overcome;
- to restore to original purity or integrity.

The World Health Organization defines *health* as « a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity»



Health and Environment

Roger Ulrich (Ulrich, 1984) has clearly recognized the strong relationship between what can be considered nature, even if highly domesticated as in urban green areas, and wellbeing.



In particular, stress is identified as the central factor that can both negatively influence health and be mitigated by the environment (Winterbottom & Wagenfeld, 2015).

Ok, now tell me
were are we?



S. Peter's Monumental Complex – Perugia - Italy



The garden project

Surface occupied by the project: around 1500 m²



-  Greenhouse project
-  Common Area
-  Vegetable garden
-  Aromatic plants
-  Carpentry workshop
-  Orchard and vineyard
-  Composting area

Participants to the project:

- University faculty and staff
- University students
- Primary school children
- People from the neighborhood
- Kindergarten kids
- American college students
- Non-profit's patients with food issues



General numbers of the project (March 2015- May 2018)

People involved in long term projects:

- 210 University students (both graduated and undergraduate)
- 25 between faculty and staff
- 30 people from the neighborhood
- More than 250 school and kindergarten kids

} Age between 3 and 78

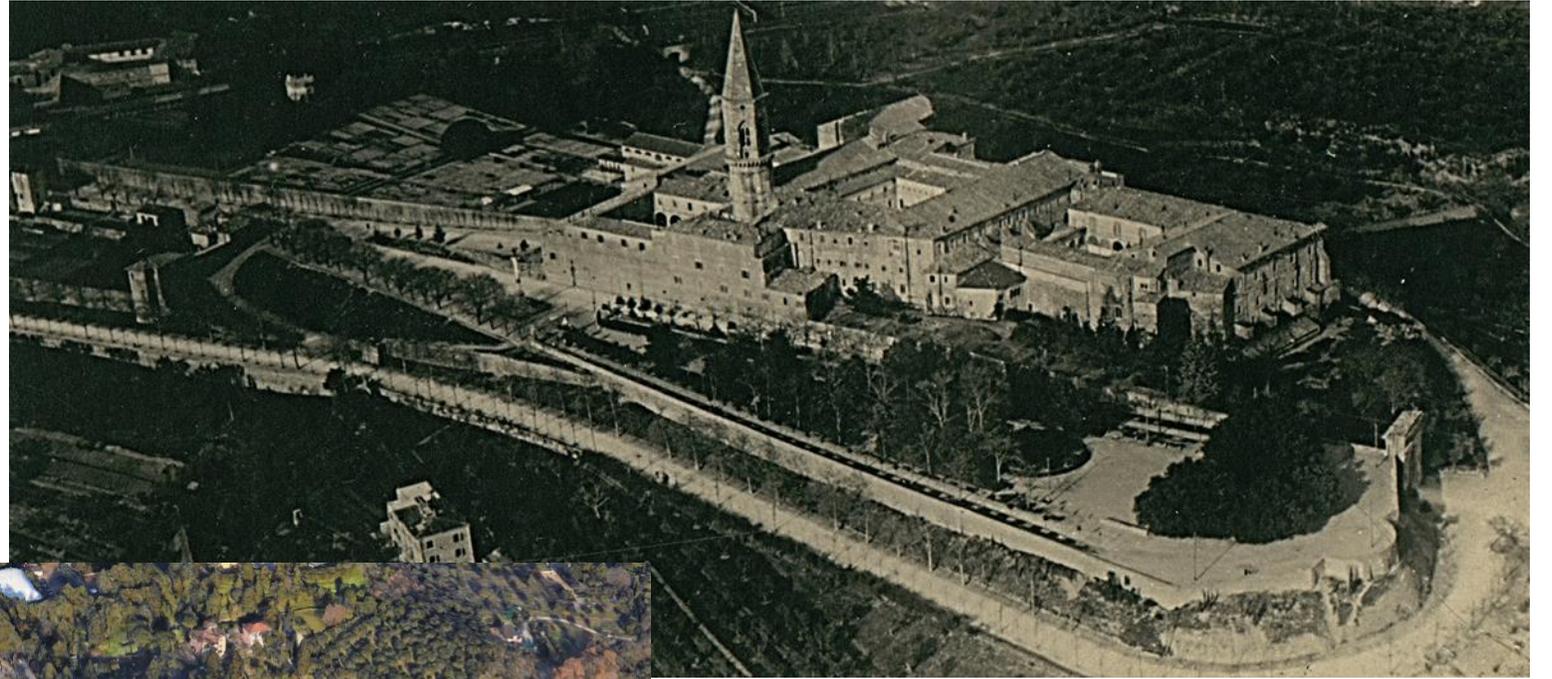
Other project outcomes:

- More than 5000 plants propagated
- Furniture: around 60 units produced between benches, tables, raised beds, plant holders.
- 2 research projects, one of which has been recently funded on the reuse of pruning by-products as raw materials for building's insulation
- 2 collaboration with companies for the supply of materials and services and for a research project on gardening automation
- 2 projects dedicated to high school students, one of which specifically aimed to students with autism spectrum disorders
- Exhibition's booths

“You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)



1910



2018



“What is now proved was once, only imagin’d” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)

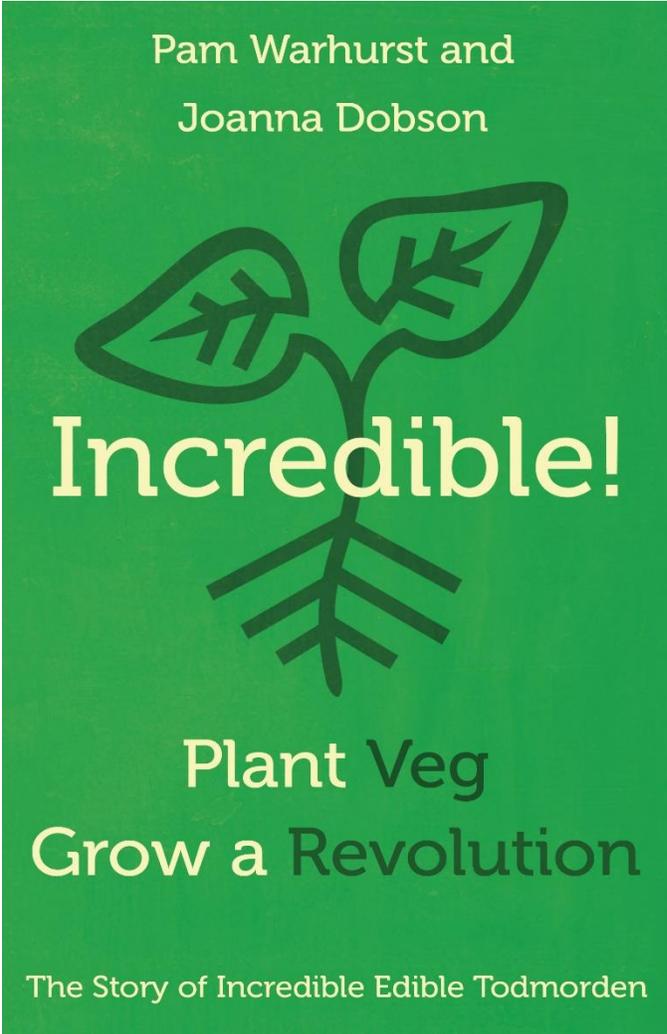
“I believe ... that the Institute ... should extend its beneficial influence as widely as possible ... spreading agrarian education to the rich and the poor, the landlords and peasants, the bourgeois and the military”

“A certain number of Professors ... find it inconsistent with the academic decorum that the humble and the uneducated men cross the doorstep of the Institute ... “

letter to the Minister Rava written by Eugenio Faina in 1906



“Exuberance is Beauty.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)



“In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)



“The busy bee has no time for sorrow.”

(W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)



“The busy bee has no time for sorrow.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)







“No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)



“The cistern contains; the fountain overflows.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)





Our travel companions: “Il Pellicano” non-profit association



Il Pellicano is a non-profit association founded in 1997, is based in Perugia and deals with Food and Weight Disorders (Anorexia, Bulimia and BED). The association, founded by patients and former patients, carries out with the contribution of professionals an activity of reception, counseling, self-help, therapy and rehabilitation according to an integrated multi-disciplinary psycho-nutritional approach.

The study group

The study group consisted of five patients including three overweight and two normal weight subjects.

Regarding the eating disorders:

- three of the patients are affected by Binge Eating Disorder (BED)
- two by Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID).

Moving

An important part of the process is the transfer of patients on foot from the headquarters of the association to the garden and vice-versa (1,2 km each way)



Working/Gardening

The patients came to the garden once every week over a period of five months, for a variable time ranging from one to three hours.



The activities carried out in the garden have ranged from sowing, transplanting, managing, to the collection of various vegetables within the greenhouse, raised beds and open field

Collecting



Learning

The second part of the activities was carried out at the “il Pellicano” headquarter and consisted in small groups’ talks about nutritional qualities of the collected vegetables.



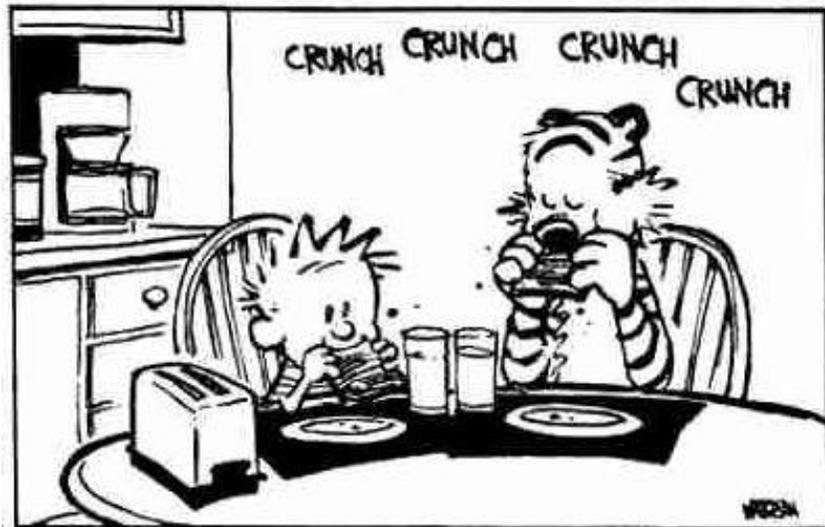
Manipulating/cooking

Manipulation and preparation of food, using the vegetables collected in the community garden, is an important step in trying to build a different relationship with food itself.



Eating

The cooked or fresh vegetable are eaten together



Work in progress

- Standardization of data collected through the use of a questionnaire, that it is still being finalized;
- another smaller area has been individuated in order to establish a further step between the indoor setting and the community garden. It is a smaller community garden composed by four raised beds and some benches;



“To create a little flower is the labour of ages.” (W. Blake – Proverbs of Hell)





Thanks for your attention!

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Credits

Photo:

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The «Tiglio» Kindergarten's teachers

The teachers of the "XX giugno" primary school